I. N. R. I.

A Prisoner's Story of the Cross

Peter Rosegger

Class 244.2 Book R721

General Theological Seminary Library

Chelsea Square, New York

Beside the main topic, this book also treats of

Subject No.	*On page*	*Subject No.*	*On page*

Purchased from the fund bequeathed to the Seminary by

EUGENE AUGUSTUS HOFFMAN, D. D.

DEAN 1879-1902

PETER KETTENFEIER ROSEGGER

tyrian Folk-Poet

"I. N. R I."

the life of Jesus Christ, His mother Maria, and many saints of God " — which he puzzled through until he could read every word. His family were delighted with this achievement, and he was soon in great demand, — to read to the sick and the dying and the corpse watchers.

It was hoped to make Peter a priest, but the money was lacking, and finally he

THE NEW Y

St. Joseph

I. N. R. I

A PRISONER'S STORY OF THE CROSS

CALIFORNIA

The Woman on the Mount

The Sermon on the Mount

I. N. R. I.

A PRISONER'S STORY OF THE CROSS

By

PETER ROSEGGER

TRANSLATED BY ELIZABETH LEE

With six illustrations in color
painted by Corwin Knapp Linson in the Holy Land

NEW YORK
McCLURE, PHILLIPS & CO.
MCMV

244.2
R721

38886

Copyright, 1905, by
McCLURE, PHILLIPS & CO.
Published October, 1905

NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

The Sermon on the Mount . . . . . *Frontispiece*

FACING PAGE

Shepherds watching Bethlehem 42

The Blessing of the Children 176

View of Jerusalem 232

Jesus before Pilate 294

The Crucifixion 312

PROLOGUE

THE difficult path which leads to the gardens where the waters of life sparkle, takes us first to a big city in which the hearts of men pulsate with feverish unrest. There is such a great crowd in the broad square in front of the law courts that the electric cars are forced to stop. Six or eight of them are standing in a row, and the police cannot break through the crowd. Every one is making for the law courts; some hurry forward excitedly, others push their way through quietly, and fresh streams of people from the side streets are continually joining the rest. The public prosecutor is expected every moment to appear on the balcony and announce the verdict to the public.

Every one was indulging in remarks about the prisoner who had wished to do so terrible a deed.

"He is condemned, sure enough!" shouted one man. "The like of him gets to heaven with a hempen cord!"

"Don't be silly," said another, with lofty superiority. "In half an hour at most he 'll pass the gate a free man. Juries don't condemn such as he."

Many agreed with the first speaker, but more with the last.

"Whoever believes that he 'll be let off is a fool!"

shouted some one. "Just consider what he did, what he wished to do!"

"He wanted to do a splendid thing!"

Passionate discussion and wagering began. It would have struck a keen observer that good broadcloth expected condemnation, while fustian and rags eagerly desired acquittal. A big man of imposing presence asked in a loud tone, over the heads of the people, if any one would bet him ten ducats that the wretch would hang.

A starved-looking little fellow declared himself willing to take up the bet. The handsome man turned his head in its silk hat, and when he saw the starved, undersized creature, murmured sleepily, "He! he 'll bet ten ducats with me! My dear sir, you 'd better go home to your mother and ask her to give you a couple of pennies."

Laughter followed; but it was interrupted. The crowd swayed suddenly, as when a gust of wind passes over the surface of the water. A man appeared on the balcony of the law courts. He had a short, dark beard; his head with its high forehead was uncovered. He stepped forward ceremoniously to the railing, and raised his hand to enforce silence. And when the murmur of the crowd died away, he exclaimed in a thin voice, but pronouncing every syllable clearly, "The prisoner, Konrad Ferleitner, is found guilty by a majority of two-thirds of the jury, and in the name of his Majesty the King is condemned to die by hanging."

He stood for a moment after making the announcement, and then went back into the house. A few isolated exclamations came from the crowd.

"To make a martyr of him! Enthusiasm is infectious!"

"An enthusiast! If he 's an enthusiast, I 'm a rascal!"

"Why not?" replied a rough-headed man with a laugh.

"Move on!" ordered the police, who were now reinforced by the military. The crowd yielded on all sides, and the tramrails were once more free.

A few minutes later a closed carriage was driven along the same road. The glint of a bayonet could be seen through the window. The crowd flocked after the carriage, but it went so swiftly over the paved road that the dust flew up under the horses' hoofs, and at length it vanished in the poplar avenue that led to the prison. Some of the people stopped, panting, and asked each other why they had run so fast. "It won't take place to-day. We shall see in the papers when it 's to come off."

"Do you think so? I tell you it 's only for specially invited and honoured guests! The times when executions were conducted in public are gone, my dear fellow. The people are kept out of the way."

"Patience, my wise compeer! It 'll be a people's holiday when the hangman is hung."

The crowd melted into the ordinary traffic of the street.

A slender, stooping man, sat handcuffed between two policemen in the carriage that rolled along the avenue. He breathed so heavily that his shoulders heaved up and down. He wore his black coat to-day, and white linen appeared at neck and sleeves. His hair was reddish brown, he had brushed it carefully, and cheeks and chin

were shaved smoothly. He had felt sure that the day would restore him to liberty, or promise it him at no very distant date. His pale face and sunken cheeks proclaimed him about forty, but he might have been younger. His blue eyes had a far-away, dreamy expression, but they were now full of terror. His face would have been handsome had not the look of terror spoiled it. His fettered hands lay on his knees, which were closely pressed together, his fingers were intertwined, his head sunken so that his chin was driven into his chest: he looked an utterly broken man. He drew in his legs so that the policemen might be more comfortable. One of them glanced at him sideways, and wondered how this gentle creature could have committed such a crime.

They drove alongside the wall of the large building, the gate of which was now opened. In the courtyard the poor sinner was taken out of the carriage and led through a second gate into an inner courtyard. The handcuffs were removed; he was led through vaulted corridors in which here and there small doors with barred windows might be seen. The dark passage had many windings, and was lighted by an occasional lamp. The air was cold and damp. The opening's high up in the wall, through which glimmered a pale daylight, became rarer, until at length it was as dark as the tomb. The new arrival was received by the gaoler, a man with bristly grey hair, a prominent forehead, and pronounced features which incessant ill-humour had twisted into a lasting grimace. Who would not be ill-humoured indeed, himself innocent, to be forced to spend his life in a dungeon among thieves and murderers and even — and

that was the worst — among those who had been foolishly led astray. Directly he saw the tottering, shadowy figure of the prisoner come round the pillar, he knew the blow had fallen. Midnight had struck for the poor fellow. Annoyed that such people should let themselves be so stupidly taken by surprise, he had continually snubbed him harshly. To-day he accompanied him to his cell in silence, and when opening it avoided rattling the keys. But he could not help looking through the spy-hole to see what the poor fellow would do. And he saw how the condemned man fell on to the brick floor and lay there motionless. The gaoler was alarmed, and opened the door again, for the man was clever enough to die quickly. That would be a miscarriage. The culprit moved slightly, and begged to be left alone.

And he was alone, once again in this damp room with the wooden bench, the straw mattress, the water-jug on a table — things which during the long period of probation he had gazed at a hundred times, thinking of nothing but "They must acquit me." Out of the planks that propped up the straw mattress he had put together a kind of table, a work of which the gaoler disapproved, but he had not destroyed it. High up in the wall was a small barred window, through which mercifully came the reflection from an outer opposite wall, now lighted by the sun. The edge of the steep gabled roof and a chimney could just be seen through the window, and in between blinked a three-cornered piece of blue sky. That was the joy of the cell. Konrad did not know that he owed this room to special kindness. The scanty light from above had been a comfort, almost a promise, all

the weary weeks: "They will send you a free man out into the sunshine!" By slow degrees that hope was extinguished in his lonely soul. And to-day? The little bit of reflection was a mockery to him. He wanted no more twilight. Daylight was gone for ever — he longed for darkness. Night! night! which would be so heavy and dark that he might not behold his misery, even inwardly. He could not think; he felt stifled, giddy, as if some one had struck him on the head with a club.

When the gaoler on his rounds peeped through the spy-hole again and saw the man still lying on the floor, he grew angry. He noisily opened the little door. "By Jove, are you still there? Number 19! Do you hear? Is anything the matter?" The last words were spoken almost gently; a stupid fellow might imagine that he was pitied. But that was not the case. A man sows as he reaps.

The prisoner stood up quickly and looked distractedly about him. When he recognized the gaoler he felt for his hand. He grasped it firmly, and said hoarsely: "I want to ask something. Send me a priest."

"Oh, at last!" grumbled the old man. "These atheists! In the end they crawl to the Cross."

"I 'm not an atheist," calmly replied the prisoner.

"Not? Well, it makes no matter. You shall have a father-confessor."

Konrad had not meant a confessor. To set himself right with God? That might come with time. But what he now most desired was a human being. No one else would come. No one will have anything to do with a ruined man. Each man thanks God that he is not such a one. But the priest must come.

In about half an hour the condemned man started, every sound at the door alarmed him — some one came. A monk quietly entered the cell. He slipped along in sandals. The dull light from the window showed an old man with a long, grey beard and cheerful-looking eyes. His gown of rough cloth was tied round the waist with a white cord, from which a rosary hung. He greeted the prisoner, reaching for his hand: "May I say good evening? I should like to, if I may."

"I sent for you, Father. I don't know if you are aware how things are with me," said Konrad.

"Yes, I know, I know. But the Lord is nearer to you to-day than He was yesterday," replied the monk.

"I have many things to say," said Konrad, hesitatingly. "But I don't want to confess. I want a man to talk to."

"You want to ease your heart, my poor friend," said the monk.

"You come to me because it 's your duty," returned Konrad. "It 's not pleasant. You have to comfort us, and don't know how to do it. There 's nothing left for me."

"Don't speak like that," said the Father. "If I understand rightly, you have not summoned me as a confessor. Only as a man, is n't that it? And I come willingly as such. I can't convert you. You must convert yourself. Imagine me to be a brother whom you have n't seen for a long time. And now he comes and finds you here, and nigh to weeping he asks you how such a thing could have happened."

The prisoner sat down on the bench, folded his hands,

and bent his head and murmured: "I had a brother. If he had lived I should not be here. He was older than I."

"Have you no other relatives?" asked the monk.

"My parents died before I was twelve years old. Quickly, one after the other. My father could not survive my mother. My mother — a poor, good woman; always cheerful, pious. In the village just outside. No one could have had a happier childhood. Ah! forgive me — " His words seemed to stick in his throat.

"Compose yourself!" counselled the priest. "Keep your childhood in your memory! It is a light in such days."

"It is over," said Konrad, controlling his sobs. "Father, that memory does not comfort me; it accuses me more heavily. How can such misfortune come from such blessing? If only I dared kneel now before my God — and thank Him that she did not live to see this day."

"Well, well!" said the Father. "Other mothers had different experiences with other sons."

"I would sacrifice everything too for the sake of our dear Lady," muttered Konrad.

"That 's right," returned the Father. "Now tell me more. Quite young, then, you lived among strangers, eh?"

He uttered confusedly: "After the deaths of my father and mother I was apprenticed. To a joiner. That was a splendid time. Only I read a great deal too much to please the master — all sorts of things, and dreamed about them. And I did n't wish to do anything wrong, at least so I imagined. The master called me a stupid visionary, and gave me the sack. Then came a period of

wandering — Munich, Cologne, Hamburg. I was two years with a master at Cologne. If only I had stayed with him! He did n't want to let me go — and there was a daughter. Then to Hamburg. That was bad luck. I was introduced into a Society for the protection of the people against traitors. To be a saviour, to risk one's life! It came to me very slowly, quite gradually, how I must learn the misery of living under such tyranny. When a boy I once killed a dog that bit some poor people's children in the street. A dog belonging to gentlefolk! I was whipped, but it scarcely hurt — there was always in my mind: 'You freed them from the beast!' And I felt just the same about the Society. I can't express what went on in me. I 'm all bewildered. Everything was said out at the trial, the whole horrible story. Only I said yes with hundreds of others, I said it and thought: It won't come to me. And it did come to me, as if our Lord had not wished it otherwise. To me, the lot fell to me, when we drew."

"I know the story, my poor fellow," said the monk.

"I don't," retorted Konrad. "From the moment they took the revolver out of my hand everything has been dark. I have known nothing. I only heard to-day that he lives. And they told me — "

"What did they tell you?"

"That I must die." Then violently addressing the priest: "It was a misfortune. Is it really so great a crime? Tell me."

"I don't think I need tell you that."

"Very well, then. So it serves me right. I desired to do the deed, and they say that 's the same as the accom-

plishment of it. Quite correct. Is n't it 'A life for a life'? It is written so in the Bible. Just that, no more. They must take mine. But — they must do it unexpectedly, suddenly. Just as I meant to do to him. Otherwise it won't be fair. Tell me, holy Father, is it cowardly to be so terrified? I am so terrified — of what is before me. There 's nothing about this terror of death in the Scriptures. Those who settled my fate to-day looked like men. Then they ought to know that they are executing me a thousand times, not once. Why do I still live, I who was slain three hours ago! Quick! From behind! If only they were so merciful! One of them said to-day it was my duty to die. My God! I think I have the right to die, and that they have n't assured me that right at once is their crime. It would have been over by now. O God, my God, if only it were over!"

So he raged on, wringing his hands, groaning under the torture. Suddenly his face became deathly white and his features stiffened as if his heart had ceased beating.

"Poor fellow," said the priest, putting his arm round his neck and drawing his head down on his breast. "You must n't talk like that. Think, if we 've been sinners all our lives, ought n't we to spend a few days in repenting? Tell me, brother, don't vou desire the consolations of religion?"

"Indeed I do," stammered the poor sinner. "And so I asked that — "

"You see, I am ready."

"And I also want the Gospels if I may be allowed the book."

The monk looked at him, then demanded quietly: "You want the New Testament?"

"I should like to read in it. My mother had one and used to read it aloud and explain it. It would give me a home-like feeling if I could read in it now."

The Father replied: "I 'll tell you something, my dear friend. The Gospel is a very good book, not in vain is it called the glad tidings."

"My God! yes; what do I more urgently need now than glad tidings?" agreed Konrad.

"Of course. But the book 's not an easy one. Out of ten readers there 's hardly one who understands it. And even he does n't really understand it. It 's too profound, I might say, too divine a book; as they say, seven times sealed. Therefore it must be explained by experts. I will willingly go through certain parts of it with you occasionally, but I shall give you something else for your edification, from which you will derive comfort and peace."

Konrad covered his face with his hands, and said, almost inaudibly: "The Gospel is what I should have liked best."

And then the monk said gravely: "My friend, you are the sick man and I am the physician. And the physician knows best what will do the sick man good. You should also prepare yourself for taking the Sacrament."

As the poor sinner said no more, the priest spoke a few kind words and left him. An hour later the gaoler brought him a parcel of books. "The holy brother sends them so that you can amuse yourself a little."

Amusement! It was a cruel joke. Konrad gave a shrill laugh. It was the laugh of a despairing man who cannot

shut out the pictures of his last journey, which became more hideous every moment. What did the Father send? Simple prayer-books and religious manuals. Bookmarkers were placed to show the passages that applied especially to the penitent and the dying man, and also prayers for poor souls in purgatory. The soul-physician, all unacquainted with souls, sent the inconsolable man new anguish of death instead of life. Konrad searched for the bread he needed, turned over the leaves of the books, began to read here and there, but always put them down sadly. The more eagerly did he exercise his memory in order to recall the pictures of his childhood. His mother, who had been dead many years, stood before him in order to help her unhappy child. Her figure, her words, her songs, her sacred stories from the Saviour's life on earth — brought peace to his soul. It suddenly came upon him: "God has not forgotten me." Just as before he had raged in despair, so now beautiful shadows out of the past appeared before him, and tears of redemption flowed from his eyes.

He did not have an hour's sleep the night of his condemnation. He prayed, he dreamed, and then the horrid terror, which made him shiver in all his limbs, came again. He kept looking towards the window to see if daylight was beginning. Early in the morning, just at the first dawn — so he had often heard — they come. The window showed only darkness. But look, in the little three-cornered bit of sky, there is a star. He had not seen it on other nights. It sailed up to the crack in the roof and shone down through the window in kindly fashion. His eye was riveted to the spark of light until it

vanished behind the walls. When at length day dawned, and the key rattled in the door, Konrad's hands and feet began to tremble. It was the gaoler, who brought him a bundle of coarse cotton clothing.

When Konrad asked in a dull voice if it was his gallows dress, the old man answered roughly: "What are you chattering about? Put on your house clothes."

The convict went up to the gaoler, clasped his hands, and said: "Only one thing, if I knew — when, when? This suspense is unbearable!"

"Eh! how impatient we are!" mocked the old man. "My dear fellow, we don't do things so quickly. The decision was only made yesterday. Why! they have n't yet settled about the banquet."

"The banquet?"

"The bill of fare — don't you understand? No orders have come yet. You 're safe for twenty-four hours. But if there 's anything you 'd like to eat — I 'll make an exception for once. And now, get on with your toilette! You can will away your own things as you please," he pointed to his clothes. "Have you any one? No. I know some poor people. But get on, get on. The hot season is coming on, and cotton is n't bad wear then."

The rough gaoler's good-humoured chatter was particularly distasteful to the poor man. To be snubbed and railed at would have pointed to a long life to come, one not to be measured by hours. Did he know? And was silent out of pity? or was it malice? Before, the old man had been easily moved to anger, and when heated would swing his arms up and down and plainly threaten the obstinate convict that he should be sent away. Now

there was no more grim humour nor raging round. He looked at the poor sinner, sunk in deep gloom, with a sad calmness. "Poor devil!" Suddenly it was too much for him, and he broke out violently: "But now leave off this! You must have known it. Be sensible; I can't stand this misery. Dying is not easy, of course; you should be glad that there 's some one by to help. And then — who knows whether you won't live after all. Be more sensible!"

When at last deep silence again gathered round him, the prisoner tried his books afresh. The Father had provided for a varied taste. The "Devotion to the Holy Rosary," the "Prayers to the Virgin's Heart," "Death, Judgment, Heaven and Hell," the "Life of St. Theresa," "The Seven Bolts of Heaven," and "Prayers of Intermission for Souls in Distress." What a wealth of edification! The joiner's apprentice had always loved books. He had once reckoned out in joke that three asses could not carry the books which he had read since his childhood. They had afforded him a glimpse of all times and places, and of all provinces of human life. Now he asked himself if any profit remained to him. Confusion, perplexity, nothing besides. He had thought about everything, but he could get clear about nothing. That was not generally possible, he had read in one of the books, and the statement pacified him. He had read all kinds of theological books, had easily and trustfully given himself up to the echo of words heard in childhood, but it had not gone deeper. Now that they ought to prove their worth, they left him in the lurch. He turned over the pages, and read and prayed and sought, and found noth-

ing to relieve his need. Discouraged, he pushed the books away from him, and some of them fell over the edge of the table on to the brick floor.

In the night that followed Konrad had a dream, so vivid and clear as never was dream before. It was a dark country, and he had lost his way. He wandered about amid cold, damp rocks, and could not find a path. Then his fingers felt a thread; he seized it, and it guided him through the darkness. The land grew brighter and brighter; the thread brought him into his sunny native valley, to the place with the old gabled houses, to his father's house which stood amidst the fruit-trees, and the thread to which his fingers still clung involuntarily led him into the room where it had been spun from his mother's distaff. And there she sat and span the thread, with her pale face and soft wrinkles and kind eyes, and directly the boy stood near her she told him tales of the Saviour. He listened to her and was a happy child. That was his dream. And when he awoke in the prison cell, his mother's gentle voice still sounded in his ears: "My child, you must cling to Jesus."

Konrad was taken every day for half an hour into the dirty and sunless courtyard. But he feared that half hour. It was a purposeless exciting of his longing for light. And the rough and insolent fellow-prisoners with whom he was brought in contact! He preferred to be alone in his quiet cell.

During his imprisonment he had often asked for work, but was always informed that nothing of the sort had been provided for in his examination. Besides —

work was an honourable thing, and it must first be proved that he was worthy of it. But now it was not a time for work, rather a time for preparation. What could he do in order to get through these days? Or what could he do in order to keep the days from flying so quickly? Look how a flash of lightning seems sometimes to pass over the floor. Then it is gone again. High up in the opposite wall, on which the sun sometimes shone, was a casement window, and its glass doors, swayed by the breeze, were reflected in the prison. Konrad was terrified by these sparks from heaven, and sought on the ground as if for a gold piece that had rolled away.

Then came visitors, unexpected, alarming visitors! The judge's stiff figure and serious face appeared in company with the gaoler.

Konrad felt stunned, and could only think: "The hour has come!" The man had pronounced his sentence as coldly and unfeelingly as if he had been a machine which, when its keys are pressed, gives forth sounds like words. The judge ordered the gaoler to withdraw. The old man hesitated — what could that mean? The judge had to repeat his order before the old man would go. When the judge was alone with the prisoner, he bent down and felt with his hands, for he was not yet accustomed to the darkness. Then he said kindly: "Konrad Ferleitner, I have come to ask you if there 's anything you wish for?"

The prisoner wrung his hands convulsively; wild pulsations, that beat in strong double strokes at irregular intervals, coursed through his body. So violent was his

agitation that the poor wretch stuttered forth words that the judge could not understand.

"Compose yourself!"

When he caught the words "Father-confessor!" amid the sounds uttered by the prisoner, it occurred to the judge that the poor fellow imagined that the hour of execution had arrived. "Ferleitner," he said, "come and sit by me on the bench. You think it 's the end — no, it has n't come so far yet, and perhaps it won't come so far at all. I may tell you that a petition for mercy has been sent to His Majesty."

Konrad looked up as if in a dream, and the dim light showed how terribly pale and sunken his cheeks were. "Mercy!" he muttered in suppressed tones. "Mercy for me? Then — why did you condemn me?"

The question appeared to puzzle the judge. The delinquent seemed in all seriousness to think himself innocent. "You were there yourself, Ferleitner, and heard how the jury decided after listening to the witnesses. Then the judge must condemn; he has no choice."

"For mercy? The king?" asked Konrad, who, more bewildered than consoled, had sat down on the bench, for his legs would scarcely support him.

"The advocate ventured it," replied the judge. "That you were deluded into this, your whole being testifies. We want nothing further. You see, Ferleitner, that evil cannot be eradicated from the world with evil. To fight evil with evil only increases its power. But a large heart can pardon such a deed or purpose. Let us hope meanwhile that our king possesses one. The Chancellor is getting better. Here, just look — sign the pa-

per." He pulled out a folded sheet, then an inkpot and a pen. Konrad bent over the table and groaned while signing his name.

"Ah," he said, "if only I could be free again! I should never think of such things again. The world could go on as it pleased. I should do my work, and not trouble about anything else. Only," and he said it softly, uncertainly, "only I shall not forget God again."

"There is naturally only a moderate chance," said the judge. "In some cases, where it is concerned with the whole — "

"It is very uncertain, then?" asked Konrad. "But, my God! how is it to be borne? If this time is lengthened, how is it to be borne? This terrible suspense!"

"It can be a time of hope," said the judge.

"But how long will it last?" asked Konrad.

The judge shrugged his shoulders. "It may last three weeks, but it might last double that time."

Konrad asked confidingly: "Do you think, sir, that a man can hold out? — terror of death lasting over weeks?"

"Have n't you just a little confidence?" asked the judge. "Have n't we all to endure uncertainty? — the judge as well as the condemned man?"

"But what am I to do?" demanded Konrad. "How am I to employ myself all the dreadful time? It 's being buried alive."

"Unhappily it 's not in my power to give you a better room. But you have n't the worst cell in the building. But perhaps you have some other desire that can be granted. Speak out frankly, Ferleitner," said the judge.

Therewith he folded the paper, and put the writing materials into his coat pocket. Konrad followed his proceedings with his eyes. He could not comprehend how this dread personage came to speak to him in so kindly a fashion. "As to the room," he said, "it 's got all I need — when you 've nothing to do, and are not likely to have anything to do, what can a man want? If a man is n't free, all the rest is one. But one thing — I have one request, sir."

"Then speak it," said the judge, and holding Konrad's hand firmly in his, broke out with: "Don't you see, it 's cruel to think, to believe, that we must be the personal enemies of all whom we 're obliged to condemn. You think it was all so callously spoken in court, and have no idea how we actually feel about it. It is not only the accused who passes sleepless nights — the judge, too, knows them. We lawyers — but outside our profession — have founded an association to support and encourage those we are obliged to pronounce guilty, that they may not sink down uncomforted. So, my dear Ferleitner, you may trust me that, as far as I can, I will alleviate your position."

Then Konrad, looking down on the floor, said: "I should like to have writing materials."

"You want to write?" asked the judge.

"If I might ask for paper, pens, and ink," returned Konrad. "In former years I used to like writing down my thoughts — just as they came. I had little education."

"You wish to write to your friends?" inquired the judge.

"Oh no! If I had any, they 'd be glad not to hear from me," said Konrad.

"Or a justification?"

"No."

"Or an account of your life?"

"No, not that either. My life has not been good enough. Misfortune should be forgotten rather than recorded. No, I think I can write something else," stated Konrad.

"You shall have writing materials," said the judge. "And is there anything else? A more comfortable bed?"

"No, thank you. It 's right enough as it is. If a hard bed was the only thing —"

"And is everything kept properly neat and clean?" interrupted the judge.

"If you 're always waiting and thinking, 'Now, now, they 're coming!' I tell you, sir, you don't sleep well," replied Konrad.

"Don't keep worrying yourself with ideas, Ferleitner," said the judge warningly to the man, who had again worked himself up into a state of excitement. "Not one of us knows what the next hour may bring, and yet we live on calmly. Use the time," he continued playfully, "in avenging your condemnation by some great literary work. In olden times great minds often did it."

"I can't write a great work," answered Konrad. "And I 've nothing to avenge. I deserve death. But it 's this waiting for it. The torments of hell cannot be worse."

"We 've nothing to do with hell. We 've merely to

think of the purgatory, in which we are placed. Let heaven, as they say, follow. Have n't you any business to arrange? Nothing to settle for any one?" asked the judge.

"No one, no one!" Konrad assured him.

"That 's a piece of luck that many of your comrades in misfortune would envy you. A man can settle things easily for himself alone. If it 's any consolation, Ferleitner, I may tell you that we don't regard you as a scoundrel, only as a poor creature who has been led astray. That 's for to-day. Your modest request shall be granted at once."

After this remarkable conversation with the poor sinner, the judge left the cell. He was not satisfied. Had he heard too little, or spoken too much? How could so childlike a creature take an oath to commit murder! In the corridor he spoke impressively to the gaoler.

"I must point out to you that the man is very ill. Don't treat him harshly."

The old man was annoyed.

"I beg your pardon, sir! To treat a poor devil like that harshly! If you pity him, why were you so rough with him?" He rubbed a lamp-glass with a coarse rag in order to get the black off. "'To die by hanging.' Even said as gently as that, it hurts more than when we roundly abuse the people, and that 's at once taken amiss. Only to prove it. Ill! Of course he 's ill, poor devil. I am only surprised the doctors have n't been to cure him. I suppose he 's well enough to be hanged?"

"That will do, Trapser."

The gaoler put down his work, stood up straight in

military fashion, and said: "Sir, I beg to resign my post."

"What!" exclaimed the judge, "you wish to go?"

"I respectfully submit to you my resignation." He stood up straight as a dart. "Do you know, I 've got accustomed to most things here in six-and-twenty years. I 've seen seventeen hanged — just seventeen, sir. There ought to have been twenty-four, but seven were granted imprisonment for life. They 're still enduring that mercy. Do you know, sir, it 's a miserable calling! But as to that Ferleitner, I never afore saw anything like him. What has he done, I ask you? He 's done nothing. You see we 've had quite different gallows-birds here. A speculator who had ruined six families and driven the seventh to suicide — eight months. A student with two duel murders on his conscience — six months. But he is there now — because he 's done nothing, I may say. Well, the long and the short of it is, it horrifies me."

"Always the same in temper and disposition, you old bear! God keep you!" And then a kindly tap on the shoulder. The attempt at resignation was again met with a refusal. The judge formally put it aside. But the old man growled on for a long time. "Old bear! old bear! That 's his whole wisdom every time. I 'll show him the old bear! Good God! that 's how things are with us!" He whistled and made a harsh noise with his bunch of keys so that the prisoners could make their preparations before he performed his duty of looking through the spy-hole to see how his charges were spending their time. Then he went and procured a big ink-bottle and a packet of foolscap paper for Number 19.

"Is it enough?" he asked.

"Thank you, thank you!" said Ferleitner; "only now I want a pen."

"Oh no, my dear sir, no. We know that sort of thing. Since the notary in Number 43 stabbed himself with a steel pen five years ago, I don't give any more," said the gaoler.

"But I can't write without a pen," returned Konrad.

"That 's not my business; I can't let you have a pen," the old man assured him.

"The judge gave me permission to have one," Konrad remonstrated modestly.

Then the old man exclaimed afresh: "Do you know, this judge, he just comes up as far as this," and he placed his hand on a level with his chin. "He crumbles everything up and then we 're to spoon it out." Then he muttered indistinctly in his beard: "I say just this, if they let a man hang for a week before they hang him, it 's a — a — good God! I can't properly — I can't find any more fine words! If a man puts a knife into himself no wonder!"

"I shan't kill myself," said Konrad quietly. "They say I may put hope in the king."

"And you want to write to him? That won't help much, but you can do it if you like; there 's time. For once it 's a good thing that our officials are so slow. If it 's any comfort to you, you may know that they wrong me, too. They won't accept my resignation. Yes, that 's how it is with us," concluded the old man.

Then he went and brought a pot with rusty steel pens. "But don't you spoil them!" For they were the very

pens with which death-warrants had been signed — the old man had a collection of such things and hoped to sell it to a rich Englishman. "Does your honour require anything else?" With those mocking words he left the cell and raged and cursed all along the corridor. The prisoners thought he was cursing them.

The judge, his hands behind his back, walked up and down his large study. What a cursed critical case! If the Chancellor had not been given up the day of the trial, the sentence would have been different. The petition for mercy! Would it have any result except that of prolonging the poor man's torture? Whether in the end it would not have been better —? Everything would have been over then. An old official came out of the adjoining room and laid a bundle of papers on the table.

"One moment. Has the petition for mercy been sent to His Majesty?"

"It has, sir."

"What 's your opinion?" asked the judge.

The counsellor raised his shoulders and let them fall again.

Konrad cowered down and stared at the table. On it lay everything — paper, ink, pens. What should he write? He might describe his sadness, but how did a man begin to do that? He lifted up his face as if searching for something. His glance fell through the window on to the wall, the upper part of which was lighted by the evening sun. The mountain tops glowed like that. Ah, world, beautiful world! Still three weeks. Or double that

time. Then — his heart-beats hurt him, hammers were hitting his temples. For he always thought of the one thing — and it suddenly flashed into his mind — there were other executioners! His supper was there — a tin can with rice soup and a piece of bread. He swallowed it mechanically to the last crumb. Then came night, and the star was again visible in the scrap of sky between the roof and the chimney. Konrad gazed at it reverently for the few minutes until it vanished. Then the long, dark, miserable night. And this was called living! And it was for such life that you petitioned the king. If a king grants mercy, it is sunshine. No — that were much to ask! He who says to his brother: "You fool," he is guilty. Then what of him who intended to kill? The kindness shown him by the judge has strengthened him a little, but the last of his surging thoughts was always, "Hopeless!"

The next night Konrad had another visitor — his mother, in her Sunday gown, just as she used to go to communion. And there was some one with her. She went up to her son's bed, and said: "Konrad, I bring you a kind friend."

When he felt for her hand, she was no longer there, but in the middle of the dim cell stood the Lord Jesus. His white garment hung down to the ground, His long hair lay over His shoulders, His shining face was turned towards Konrad.

When the poor sinner woke in the morning his heart was full of wonder. The night had brought healing. He jumped blithely out of bed. "Divine figure, I will never more leave you."

Something of which he had hardly been conscious

suddenly became clear to him. He would take refuge in the Saviour. He would sink himself in Jesus, in whom everything was united that had formed and must form his happiness — his mother, his innocent childhood, his joy in God, his repose and hope, his immortal life. Now he knew, he would rely on his Saviour. He would write a book about Jesus. Not a proper literary work; he could not do that, he had no talent for it. But he would represent the Lord as He lived, he would inweave his whole soul with his Saviour's figure so that he might have a friend in the cell. Then perhaps his terrors would vanish. In former days it had pleased him, so to speak, to write away an anxiety from his heart, not always in letters, but often only for himself. There were many things about which he was not clear, which he found incomprehensible; but when he took his pen in hand, his inward eye so strengthened that vague pictures took almost corporeal shape. He had in that fashion created many comrades and many companions during his wanderings in strange lands when he was afraid. So now in his forlorn and deserted condition he would try to invite the Saviour into the poor sinner's cell. No outward help was to be hoped, he must evoke it all out of himself. He would venture to beg the Lord Jesus until He came, using his childish memories, the remains of his school learning, the fragments of his reading, and above all, his mother's Bible stories.

And now the condemned man began to write a book in so far as it was possible to him. At first his dreams and thoughts and figures were disconnected through timidity, and the painful excitement which often made his

pulses gallop and his heart stop beating. Then he cowered in the corner, and wept and groaned and struggled in vain with the desire for mortal life. When he succeeded in collecting his thoughts again, and he took up his pen afresh, he gradually regained calm, and each time it lasted longer. And it happened that he often wrote for hours at a stretch, that his cheeks began to glow and his eyes to shine — for he wandered with Jesus in Galilee. Suddenly he would awake from his visions and find himself in his prison cell, and sadness overcame him, but it was no longer a falling into the pit of hell; he was strong enough to save himself on his island of the blessed. And so he wrote and wrote. He did not ask if it was the Saviour of the books. It was his Saviour as he lived in Him, and could redeem him and only him. And so there was accomplished in this poor sinner in little what was accomplished among the nations in large: if it was not always the historical Jesus as Saviour, it was the Saviour in whom men believed become historical, since he affected the world's history through the hearts of men. He whom the books present is not for all men; He who lives in men's hearts is for all. That is the secret of the Saviour's eternal strength: He is for each man just what that man needs. We read in the Gospels that Jesus appeared at different times and to different men in different forms. That should be a warning to us to grant each man his own Jesus. As long as it is the Jesus of love and trust, it is the right Jesus.

It often happened that during the prisoner's composition and writing, a bigger, softer light from the window spread through the cell, flickered over the wall, the

floor, the table, and then rested for a space on the white paper. And so light entered even the lonely room, but unspeakably more light entered the writer's heart.

The gaoler saw little of the writing. Directly he rattled his keys, it was hidden under the sheet — just as children hide their treasures from intrusive eyes. When five or six weeks had gone by, hundreds of written sheets lay there. Konrad placed them in a cover and wrote on it:

I.N.R.I.

CHAPTER ONE

When darkness covers the world men gladly look towards the east. There light dawns. All lights come from out of the east. The races of men came hither from that quarter. There is an ancient book, in which is written the beginning of things and of the just men. The book came from the nation of the Jews, and the old Jews were called the people of God, for they recognized only one eternal God. And great men arose in that nation, who taught holy things. The greatest of them was named Moses, and it is written that he it was who brought men the Ten Commandments from heaven. But the Jews fell on evil times, they sank lower and lower and were heavily oppressed by stronger nations. Like us, they endured poverty and curses and despair, and it lasted for a thousand years and more. Prophets appeared from time to time, and with words of mercy announced that a Saviour would come to lead the Jews into the kingdom of glory. They waited many hundreds of years for that Saviour. Sometimes one would appear whom they took for Him, but they were deceived. And when at last the real Saviour appeared, they did not recognize Him, for He was different from what they had imagined.

Shall I try to tell how it happened, just as my mother

used to tell me, her little boy, the story on winter evenings? Shall I recite it to myself like one who desires to wake himself at midnight before the Lord comes? Shall I, who am without learning, search in my poor confused head for the fragments that have remained in it? So much has been lost in the wear and tear of the world, and yet since it has grown so dark with me something flashes out, and gives a light on high, as on the night of the starry crown! Shall I invoke the holy forms that they may stand by me through the anguish of my last days, that they may surround me with their eternal glad light, and that no spirit of despair may come near me? The path between the walls of this cruel fortress is narrow, and through it only scanty light penetrates to me.

As God wills, I am grateful for and content with the pale reflection of the sky that comes to me from the holy east through the cracks in the wall. Oh, God, my Father, let glad tidings come to me from distant lands and far-off times, so that my simple heart can comprehend and understand it. I am thirsty for God's truth, for whatever shall strengthen, comfort, and save me, will be for me God's truth. Oh, thou pale light! Art thou my mother's heritage and blessing? Oh, my mother! From out thy eternal dwelling speak to thy unhappy son — oh, speak!

I always saw in you the woman who, in the cold winter season, was compelled to go across the mountains far from home. And so I will begin.

At that time the land of the Jews was under the dominion of the Romans. The Roman Emperor wished to know how many there were of them, and commanded

that an enrolment of the people should be made in Judæa. All the Jews were to go to the place of their birth, and there report themselves to the Imperial officer. In the little town of Nazareth, in Galilee — a mountainous district of Judæa — there lived a carpenter. He was an elderly man, and had married a young wife, of whom a folk-song still sings —

> "*As beautifully white as chalk*
> *As beautifully soft as silk;*
> *A wondrously beautiful woman,*
> *And yet full of humility.*"

They were poor people, but pious and industrious and obedient. No man in the wide world troubled about them, and yet, without that carpenter, the Roman Empire would not have fallen. I might almost say, it fell later because of that carpenter. People from all quarters of the globe dwelt in Galilee, even barbarians, who had wandered there from the west and the north. And it was often difficult to distinguish their descent. Our carpenter was born in the south of Judæa, in the town of Bethlehem, which, in olden times, had been the native place of King David. Joseph, the carpenter, was not unwilling to speak of that, and even to let it appear that he was of the house of David, the great king. But yet he may have thought it 's a finer thing to rise up from below than to come down from above. And is it not so ? Does not man rise up from below, and God come down from on high ? In his boyhood David was a shepherd; it is said that he slew the leader of the enemy with stones from his sling,

and that was why he rose so high. Now for that reason, and because Joseph, the carpenter, was glad to visit his native town once again, and to take his wife with him and show her the land of his youth, the enrolment of the people was right pleasing unto him. So the two made their plans, and set out for Bethlehem. It was three days' journey and more, and they might well have complained. If a workman to-day has not all that is of the best, he should think of Master Joseph, who always cared more for good work than good money. They probably took a packet of food with them from home, and the bride was often obliged to rest by the way. The path over the rocky mountains was difficult and tiring, and they had to pass through the suspected land of Samaria. But Joseph never grumbled. And at last they reached Judæa. And when they came upon ancient monuments, he liked to stop, first in order to see how they were built, and then to ponder over the great men and great deeds of olden times. They spent a night at a place called Bethel, and there Joseph dreamed that he saw a ladder before him, and that it reached from earth to heaven. And Joseph thought, if the rungs would bear him, he might perhaps ascend it; meanwhile, he saw how an angel, robed in white, slowly descended it until he came down to where Joseph was. But when Joseph stretched out his hand to him, the angel was no longer to be seen. Joseph awoke, and the sweet dream filled his soul, and it was the place where once the Patriarch Jacob saw the heavenly ladder, and there it had remained ever since, so that angels might continually descend and ascend between heaven and earth. And then they cheerfully continued

their way. Joseph was afraid when he heard the jackals shriek in the desert and saw the Bedouin camps. But he thought the angel who had come down was hovering near him, and often imagined that he felt his wings fanning his cheek.

The land through which they journeyed was barren; the plants were dried up by the frost and were all faded. Snow lay on the summits of Lebanon, which the travellers now saw from afar away in their native land, and pale gleams fell on to the lowlands of Judæa through the cloudy atmosphere, so that stones and grass were white. When they rested beside a brook the woman gazed thoughtfully into the pool and said, "Look, Joseph; what are the wonderful plants and flowers on the surface of the water?"

And Joseph said, "Have n't you ever seen them before, Mary? You are young and have only known a few cold winters. And you don't know what these flowers mean? Listen to me! A maiden stands in the dawn. Her feet are on the moon and the stars circle round her head. And she crushes the head of the serpent who betrayed our first parents in Paradise under her foot. And see, Spring courts the maiden and brings her his roses. And Winter, too, courts the maiden, and because he has no other flowers he makes these to grow on the surface of the water and on the window-panes. But they are stiff and cold, and the maiden, the mysterious rose, of whom a prophet sang, 'All nations praise and bless thee!' she chose the Spring."

That was the story Joseph told, Joseph whose beard was white as the ice-flowers. Mary listened to the tale and was silent.

On the third day the royal city lay before our wanderers. Magnificent it stood on the hill-top with the domes and pinnacles of its temples. At that time Herod, king of the Jews, sat on the throne and imagined that he ruled. But he only ruled in so far as the strangers allowed him to rule. The town which had once been the pride of the chosen people, now swarmed with Roman warriors, who filled the streets with noise and unruly conduct. Joseph led his young wife down towards the sloping rocks where were the graves of the prophets. There he was so overcome that suddenly he stretched forth his hands to heaven: "Almighty Jehovah, when will the Messiah come?" His cry was re-echoed in the hollows of the rocks, and Mary said: "You should not shriek so, Joseph. The dead will not awaken, and Jehovah hears a prayer that is quietly spoken."

Mary had hoped in her heart that they would enter Jerusalem and spend the night there. Joseph said it could not be, for he had no relatives in the town who could give them lodging, and he had not money enough to pay strangers for a lodging. Also he did not like the strange ways of the place; he yearned for his beloved Bethlehem. It was n't very far off now; could she manage it?

Mary signed "Yes" with her head, and gathered together all her remaining strength. But just beyond the city walls she sank down exhausted, and Joseph said: "We will stay here so that you may rest, and to-morrow I can show you the Temple."

There was a man on a stony hillock nailing two beams of wood together. Joseph understood something of that

sort of work, but he was not quite clear over this particular thing. So he asked what it might be?

"He for whose use it is, does n't want it," replied the workman. It then flashed into Joseph's mind that it was a gallows.

Mary grasped his arm: "Joseph, let us go on to Bethlehem." For she began to be frightened.

They staggered along the road. A draught of the spring of the Valley of Jehoshaphat refreshed them. Farther on in the fertile plain of Judæa lambs and kids were feeding, and Joseph began to speak of his childhood. His whole being was fresh and joyful. Home! And by evening time Bethehlem, lighted by the setting sun, lay before them on the hill-top.

They stood still for a space and looked at it. Then Joseph went into the town to inquire about the place and the time of the enrolment, and to seek lodging for the night. The young woman sat down before the gate under the fan-shaped leaves of a palm-tree and looked about her. The western land seemed very strange to her and yet sweet, for it was her Joseph's childish home. How noisy it was in Jerusalem, and how peaceful it was here — almost as still and solemn as a Sabbath evening at Nazareth! Beloved Nazareth! How far away, how far away! Sometimes the sound of a shepherd's pipe was heard from the green hills. A youth leaned up against an olive-tree and made a wreath of twigs and sang: "Behold thou art fair, my love. Thine eyes are as doves in thy fragrant locks, thy lips are rosebuds, and thy two breasts are like roes which feed among the lilies. Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse." Then he

was silent, and the leaves rustled softly in the evening breeze.

Mary looked out for Joseph, but he came not. And the singer continued: "Who art thou that shinest like the day-dawn, fair as the moon, and clear as the sun, divine daughter of Eve?" And Mary still waited under the palm-tree and listened, and she began to feel strange pangs. She drew her cloak more closely round her, and saw that the stars already stood in the sky. But still Joseph came not. And from the hill the singer: "And from the root of Jesse a twig shall spring." And a second voice: "And all nations shall rise up and sing her praises." So did the shepherds sing the songs of their old kings and prophets.

At last Joseph came slowly from the town. The enrolment was to take place to-morrow at nine o'clock; that was all right. But there was difficulty over the lodging for the night. He had spoken with rich relations; they would have been very glad, but unfortunately a wedding-feast was going forward, and wanderers in homely garments might easily feel uncomfortable. He quite understood that. Then he went to his poorer relations, who would have been even more glad, but it was deplorable that their house was so small and their hearth so cramped. All the inns were overcrowded with strangers. They did not seem to think much here of people from Galilee, because all kinds of heathenish folk lived there — as if any one who was born in Bethlehem could be a heathen! And so he did not know what to do.

Mary leaned her head on her hand and said nothing.

"Your hands and feet are trembling, Mary," said Joseph.

She shook her head; it was nothing.

"Come, my wife, we will go in together," said Joseph. "We are not vagabonds to whom they can refuse assistance."

And then they both went into the town. Mine host of the inn was stern.

"I told you already, old man, that there 's no place for the like of you in my house. Take your little daughter somewhere else."

"She 's not my daughter, sir, but my true wife, trusted to me by God that I may protect her," returned Joseph, and he lifted up his carpenter's hand.

The door was slammed in their faces.

A fruit-seller, who had witnessed the scene, stretched forth his brown neck and asked for their passport.

"If you show me your papers and three pieces of silver, I 'll take you in for the love of God. For we are all wanderers on the earth."

"We 've no passport. We 've come from Nazareth in Galilee for the enrolment, because I am of the house of David," replied Joseph.

"Of the house of David! Why, you don't seem to know whether you 're on your head or your heels," and with a laugh the fruit-seller went his way.

"It is true," thought Joseph, "noble ancestors are useless to a man of no importance." For the future he would let David alone.

Mary now advised him to go outside the town again. Perhaps the very poor or entire strangers would have

pity on them. And as they staggered along the stony road to the valley the woman sank down on the grass.

Joseph looked at her searchingly. "Mary, Mary, what is it?"

A shepherd came along, looked at them, and listened to their request for shelter.

"My wife is ill, and no one will take us in," complained Joseph.

"Then you must go to the beasts," said the shepherd cheerfully. "Come with me. I 'll gladly share my house with you. The earth is my bed, the sky my roof, and a rocky cave my bedchamber."

And he led them to a hollow in the mossy rocks and it had a roof woven out of rushes. Inside an ox was chewing the hay it had eaten out of the manger. A brown ass stood near by and licked the ox's big head. There was still some hay left in the manger, and in the corner was a bed of dry leaves.

"Since you have nothing better, lie down here and rest as well as you can. I will seek a bed at my neighbour's.

So saying the shepherd went away. It had now grown dark.

The young woman lay down on the bed of leaves and heaved a sigh from her terrified heart. Joseph looked at her — and looked at her. Lightly the angel's wings touched his face.

"Joseph, be not afraid. Lift up your heart and pray. It is the secret of all eternities, and you are chosen to be the foster-father of Him who comes from heaven."

He looked round him, not knowing whence came these thoughts, these voices, this wondrous singing.

"You are tired, Joseph, you must sleep," said Mary. And when he slumbered peacefully she prayed in her heart: "I am a poor handmaiden of the Lord. The will of the Lord be done."

CHAPTER TWO

It is midnight, and wakeful shepherds see a bright star. A strange star, too; they had never seen its like before. It sparkled so brightly that the shepherds' shadows on the plain were long. And it is said that they saw other stars approach it, and at length surround it. And then the new star threw off white sparks, which flew down earthwards and stopped in mid-air; and there were children with white wings and golden hair. And they sang beautiful words to the honour of God and the good-will of men.

In that selfsame hour a boy brought tidings that a tall, white-robed youth stood in front of the shepherd Ishmael's cave, and that within lay a young woman on the bed of leaves, an infant at her breast. And high up in the air they heard singing.

The story quickly spread through the mountains round Bethlehem. The shepherds who were awake roused those who slept. Everywhere a delicious tremour was felt, a sense of mighty wonder. A poor, strange woman and a naked child! What was the use of singing? Swaddling clothes and wraps and milk were what was needed. One brought the fleece of a slaughtered sheep. Another brought dried figs and grapes and a skin of red wine. Other shepherds brought milk and bread and a fat

Shepherds Watching Bethlehem

GETTY RESEARCH LIBRARY

Missing pages
blank

kid; every one brought something, just as they took tithes to the officer. An old shepherd came with a patched bagpipe, and when the bystanders laughed, Ishmael said: "Do you expect our poor, good Isaac, to bring David's golden harp? He gives what he has, and that 's often worth more than golden harps."

When they came down they no longer saw the star or the angels, but they found the cave, and the father and the mother and the child. He lay in the manger on the hay, and the beasts stood round and gazed at him with their big, melancholy, black eyes. The shepherd's pity for the poor people was so great that no one thought he was doing a good work for which people would praise him and God would bless him. No one looked slily at his neighbour to see who gave more and who less. Their one feeling was pity.

People came from the town; and a wiry shepherd, placing himself before the entrance to the grotto, and using his staff as a spear, said: "Men of Bethlehem, ye cannot enter; the babe sleeps."

Near by stood an old man, who said dreamily: "The town cast him out. I always said there was no salvation yonder. That 's to be found with the poor under the open sky. Miracles are happening here, men are pitiful. What does it mean?"

Down below in a cleft of the rock cowered a poor sinner, and burrowed in the earth with his lean fingers as if he would dig himself a grave in its depths. He gazed at the cave where the child was with glassy, staring eyes. A prayer for mercy surged up in his heart like a stream of blood. Those who saw him turned from him shuddering. They took him for Cain, his brother's murderer.

CHAPTER THREE

A STRANGER was riding a lazy camel across the lonely Arabian desert. All men are Moors in the dark, but this man was a Moor in the starlight. A newly discovered star brought the man from the banks of the Indus. He consulted all the calendars of the East, but none could tell him about the star. Balthasar, however, was not the man to let the strange, incomprehensible star escape him. Nothing can be concealed in God's bosom from an Eastern scholar, for not even God himself has a passport for the land of the all-wise. The world is through them alone and for them alone; man must grow of himself towards the light as the lotus grows out of the mud. So thought Balthasar, and felt that life was a failure.

In such wisdom the faith of Orientals lives and moves and has its being. If man honestly aspires to higher things and tortures his flesh, it may go better with him in another life. For he must be born again many times, and must torture his body until it shrivels up, is freed from sin, and is without desires. Then the soul is released and is not born again, for Nirvana, the last goal, is reached. Only bad men continue to live. The nations of India had been demoralized by that doctrine for centuries. But it did not satisfy wise men. Balthasar thought: If a man

starves through a few dozen lives, then something good must come out of it. Or is evil good enough to continue, and good evil enough to cease? Balthasar sought better counsel. He sought throughout the universe for a peg on which to hang a new, more beneficial philosophy of life. When, then, he saw the new star in the sky, he never ceased looking at it. And, lo! it too took the road from east to west which all men traversed. What was there yonder in the sunset that all went towards it, on earth as in heaven? Could not one particular star swim against the stream? True, this new heavenly pilgrim took an unusual path; he leaned somewhat to the north of the barbarous folk. So the wise man of the east left the fragrant gardens of India and followed the star. On the road he was joined by two Oriental princes and their suites, who were also seeking they knew not what.

And one night the three wise men saw in the heavens an extraordinary constellation, a group of stars hitherto unknown to any of them.

They looked at the constellation for a long while, and Balthasar thought it was like writing. They brought all their wisdom to bear on it, but could not explain it, for all

it shone so brightly. Did the gods mean to write some message? Who could understand it? An uncanny appearance, which no knowledge or faith could explain! The next night they did not see it, but the guiding star still went before them and yielded to no sun.

One morning, just as day began to dawn, they rode through the streets of Jericho. A man was lying on his face in the road, and the Moor asked him why he lay in the dust.

"I lie in the dust," answered the man of Judah, "because I must practise myself in humility in order not to become too proud. We have become great beyond measure these last days. The King of the Jews is born, the Messiah promised of God."

Then the wise man from India remembered how the Jews had been expecting their Messiah for ages, the royal deliverer from bondage.

"I though you had King Herod," he said.

"He 's not the right king," answered the man in the dust. "Herod is a heathen, and cringes to the Romans."

And now clouds from Lebanon hid the star, and the travellers knew not which way to go. Balthasar, perplexed, went towards the neighbouring city of Jerusalem; there surely he would be able too learn more. He asked at the royal palace about the new-born king. Such a question was news to King Herod. A son born to him? He knew nothing about it. He would see the strangers who asked such a question.

"Sire," said the Moor, "something is in the air. Your people are whispering of the Messiah."

"I 'll have them beheaded!" shouted Herod angrily;

then, more gently: "I 'll chop off their heads if they don't kneel before the Messiah. I myself will bow before Him. If only I knew where to find Him."

"I 'll go and look around a little," said the complacent Balthasar, "and if I find Him I 'll come and tell you."

"Do, do, noble stranger," said Herod. "And then, pray take your ease at my palace as long as you like. Are you fond of golden wine?"

"I drink red wine," answered the Moor.

"Or of the fair women of the west?" asked the king.

"I love dark-skinned women," said Balthasar.

"Good! Then come, my friend, and bring me news of the new-born king."

Balthasar rode on farther with his companions, and directly he left the town the star again shone in front of him. It hung high up in the heavens, and after they had followed it for some hours it slowly turned its course earthwards, and stopped above a cave in the rocks. And there the strangers who had ridden out of the east to seek for truth, there they found truth and life, there they found a child, a child who was as tender and beautiful as a rosebud in the moonlight, a little child born to poor people, and other poor folk stood round and offered the very last of their possessions, and were full of joy.

Dusky Balthasar peered inside. Had he ever seen eyes shine as in this shepherd's cave? It seemed to him that he saw a new light and a new life there; but he could not understand it. And in the air he heard a strange song, more a suggestion than words: "You will be blessed! You will live forever!"

The strangers hearkened. What was that? You will be blessed, and you will live forever! For us happiness is to be found only in non-existence. At sight of this newborn infant the idea of immortal life came to them for the first time.

They offered the poor mother precious jewels, and their hearts were glad and happy and strange within them. Formerly these princes and wise men had only found pleasure in receiving, now they found it in giving. Formerly Balthasar had been all sufficient unto himself, he had woven his thoughts in entire loneliness, had despised the rest of the world, and had only cared for himself. And suddenly there came to him this joy in the joy of poor men, and this suffering at their suffering! He shivered in his silken cloak, and when he took it off and wrapped it about the child he was warm.

They all offered gifts, precious gold and rich perfumes and healing ointments. But they were ashamed of their gifts beside the royal offerings of the shepherds, who, though it was not much, brought all that they possessed.

Balthasar in his joy wished to hasten to Jerusalem in order to tell Herod: I have not yet found the King of the Jews, but I have found a poor child, and whoever looks upon him is happy, he knows not why. Now kings are not so anxious to be happy; they prefer to be powerful. A youth came forward from the back of the cave and said to Balthasar: "Do you know the man to whom you would go? Why, he would strangle the Emperor Tiberius if he could. Be silent, then, about a helpless child who is loved by the people as a prince."

"Oh, child!" cried Balthasar, "you have the mis-

fortune to be the people's favourite. Therefore the great hate thee."

"Stranger, go not to Jerusalem Say nothing of the child."

The strangers did not feel at ease in a land which had an emperor and a king, neither of whom was the right ruler! And so they mounted their camels. They took one more look at the child in the manger and then rode away straight over the stony desert. They directed their course towards the east, towards all the starry constellations, and dreamed of a new revelation which might enable them henceforth to live rich in love and ever glad.

Meanwhile King Herod, sleeping or waking, was not at peace. It was not on account of his wife or his brothers whom he had had murdered from a suspicion that they might kill him to secure the throne. It was something else that caused his anxiety. The new-born king! No one mentioned the news at court, but he heard it from the walls of his palace, from the flowers of his garden, from the pillows of his couch. Who had first spoken the word? Whence did it come? A new-born king! Where? He must forthwith hasten to do him homage, to present him with a gift tied with a silken string. And one day the decree came to Bethlehem that every mother who had an infant son should bring it to the king's palace at Jerusalem, for the king desired to see the progeny of his subjects in order to discover what hope there was for the delivery of the land of the Jews from bondage: he wished to present gifts to the boys; yes, he was preparing a great surprise for his people. No little excitement prevailed among the women, who declared that the childless king

intended to adopt the handsomest boy as his own son. Since each mother considered her son the handsomest and most attractive, she took the boy that she had and carried him to Jerusalem to the palace of King Herod. And those who refused to go were sought out by the guards.

Unhappy day, O Herod! which bears thy name for all time! The angry king, desiring to kill the anti-king, commanded the wholesale murder of the future protectors of his realm! He destroyed the race which had formerly saved the beautiful city from ruin!

"All hail to our king, long may he live!" shouted the mothers in the courtyard of the palace. Then knaves rushed out from all the doors, tore the children from their mothers' arms, and slew them. None can describe, indeed none would attempt to describe how the unhappy mothers strove frantically with the tyrants until they fell fainting or lifeless upon the bodies of their dear ones. Tremble, O men, before the terrible decree of Herod, murderer of the innocents, yet despair not. He for whom they spilled their blood by God's decree will requite it in full measure.

CHAPTER FOUR

He at whom Herod had struck was not among the slaughtered innocents. For Mary had no desire to show her babe to the king.

They kept in hiding with their great treasure. They remained in hiding a long time. The rite of circumcision made the boy a member of the nation which God had named his chosen people. The child's ancestors reached back to Abraham, to whom the promise was made. And if according to Holy Writ I trace his descent from the race of Abraham, branch by branch, it comes at last to Joseph, Mary's husband. And it is here that the glad tidings turn us aside with firm hand from all earthly existence — to the Spirit through which Mary had borne Him, Him whom with holy awe we call Jesus.

Now it came to pass one night that Joseph awoke from his sleep: "Arise, Joseph, wake them, and flee!" The voice called to him clearly and distinctly: twice, thrice.

"Flee? before whom? The shepherds protect us," Joseph ventured to say.

"The king will have the child. Make your preparations quickly and flee."

Joseph looked at his wife and child. Their faces were

white in the moonlight. To think that such as they had an enemy on the earth! Flee! But whither? where the king could not reach them? His arm extended throughout the whole of Judæa; we must not dream of going to Nazareth; he would be sure to seek us there. Shall we go towards the land where the sun rises? There dwell wild men of the desert. Or towards the setting sun? There are the boundless waters, and we have no boat in which to sail thither, where the heathens live who have kinder hearts than the grim princes of Israel.

"Wake them!" called the voice clearly and urgingly. "Take them to the land of the Pharaohs."

"To Egypt, where our forefathers were slaves, and were only delivered with difficulty?" asked Joseph.

"Joseph, delay not. Go to the people whose faith is folly, but whose will is just, yonder where the waters of the Nile make the land fertile and bless it; there you will find peace and livelihood, safety for your wife, and teaching for the child. When the time comes, God will lead you back as once He led Moses and Joshua across the sea."

Joseph knew not whose voice it was; he did not seek to know, and doubted not his soul rested trustfully in the arms of the Lord. He put his hand on the shoulders of his dearest one, and said softly: "Mary, awake, and be not afraid. Gather together our few possessions, put them in a sack, and I will fasten it to the beast Ishmael gave us. Then take the child. We must away."

Mary pushed her long, soft, silky hair from her face. Her husband's sudden decision, the departure in the middle of the night, made her wonder, but she said not a

word. She gathered together their scanty possessions, took the sleeping child in her arms, and mounted the ass, who pricked up his ears and thought what a day's work must be before him since it began so terribly early. His former owner had not pampered him; his short legs were firm and willing. They gave one last grateful look at the cave, the stones of which were softer than the hearts of the men of Bethlehem. Joseph took his stick and a leathern strap and walked beside the ass, leading it, the ass which carried his whole world and his heaven, and — the heaven of the whole world.

After going some way, they thought to rest under some palm-trees, not far from Hebron. But the ass would not stop, and they let him have his will. Then soldiers of Herod rode that way; they saw a brown-skinned woman with a child sitting on the sand.

"Is it a boy?" they called to her.

"A girl," answered the woman. "But strangers have just passed by, and I think they had a boy with them, if you can come up with them."

And the horsemen galloped on. Meanwhile the fugitives from Nazareth had reached bad roads, and were tired and wretched. Was not Jacob's favourite son also taken into Egypt just like this child? What will become of this one? They became aware of their pursuers galloping behind over the bare plain. Not a tree, not a shrub which could afford them protection. They took refuge in the cleft of a rock, but Joseph said: "What is the use of hiding? They must have seen us." But as soon as they were well inside the dark hole, down came a spider from the mossy wall, summoned all her brood and her most

distant relations in great haste, and they speedily spun a web over the opening, a web that was stronger than the iron railings in Solomon's temple, at the entrance to the Holy of Holies. Hardly was the weaving finished when the knaves came riding up. One said: "They crept into the hole in the rock."

"What! " shouted another, "no one could have crept in there since the time of David the shepherd. Look at the thick cobwebs."

"That 's true," they laughed, and straightway rode off.

An old man who seemed to have risen from the grave now stood before the dusky woman who had denied her own son and betrayed the stranger wanderers. Whence he came he did not know himself. He loved the lonely desert, the home of great thoughts. He did not fear the robbers of the desert, for he was stronger than they because he had nothing. Now and again the desire came to him to behold a human face, so that he might read therein whether the souls of men looked upwards or sank downwards. The old man went up to the woman who had denied her own son and betrayed the fugitives. And he said: "Daughter of Uriah! twice have you given your son life; once through pleasure, once through a lie. So his life will be a lie. He will breathe without living, and yet he will not be able to die!"

"Mercy!" she cried.

"He will see Jerusalem fall!"

"Woe is me!"

"He will see Rome burn!"

"Mercy!" she groaned.

"He will see the old world perish. He will see the barbarians of the north prevail. He will wander restless, he will be ill-treated and despised everywhere, he will suffer the boundless despair of universal misery, and he will not be able to die. He will envy men their death anguish and their right to die. He will learn how they suck sweet poison from the loveliest blossoms, and how twelve-year-old boys kill themselves from sheer weariness. He is the son of lies and is banished into the kingdom of lies. He will lament over the torments of old age, and he will not be able to die. He will call those children whom Herod slew blessed, and gnash his teeth at the memory of the woman who saved him through a lie."

"Oh, stop!" shrieked the woman. "When will he be redeemed?"

"Perhaps when the eternal Truth is come."

CHAPTER FIVE

THE desert lay under a leaden sky. The yellow undulating sandy plain was like a frozen sea that had no end, and so far as eye could see was only bounded by the dark orb of heaven. Here and there, grey, cleft, cone-shaped rocks and blunt-cornered stone boulders or blocks and flat-topped stones not unlike a table rose out of the sand-ocean. Two such stones were situated close together; one was partly covered by the yellow quicksand, the other stood higher out of the ground. On each of them lay a man stretched at full length. One, strong and sinewy, lay on his face, supporting his black-bearded cheeks with his hands so that his half-raised face could gaze over the barren plain. The other, a smaller-made man, lay on his back, making a pillow of his arms, and gazed at the gloomy sky. Both wore the Bedouin dress and were provided with arms which were fastened into, or suspended from, their clothes. Their woolly heads were protected by kerchiefs. Their complexion was as brown as the bark of the pine-tree, their eyes big and sparkling, their lips full and red. The one had a snub nose; the nose of the other was long and thin. So do these men of the desert appear to my mind's eye.

"Dismas," said the snub-nosed man, "what do you see in the sky?"

"Barabbas," replied the other, "what do you see in the desert?"

"Are you waiting for manna to fall from the sky?" said Barabbas. "Do you know that I 'm almost starved to death? I must go down to the caravan route."

"Well, go. I 'll to the oasis of Sheba," said Dismas.

"Dismas, I hate you," growled the other.

Dismas said nothing, and steadfastly looked at the sky, which had not for a long while been so softly sunless as to-day.

"Since the day when you refused to help me hold up the caravan of Orientals with my men, I have hated you. They had much frankincense and precious spices and gold. With one blow we should have provided ourselves with enough for many a long year. And you — "

"Wanderers who were seeking the Messiah! I do not attack such as they," said Dismas.

"You, too, are seeking Him, you pious highwayman."

"Of course, I seek Him."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed he of the snub nose, pressing his pointed chin into his hand. "The Messiah! the fairy-tale of dreaming old men. All weak men dream and believe. Don't you see that when you have to strive and struggle for your little bit of life there is n't time to wait for the Messiah!"

"That 's just what I 've believed for many a year and day," answered Dismas sadly. "I left my home to follow you; I 've plundered men of silks and precious stones

here in the desert, and time has flown nevertheless. All the treasure in the world cannot bid it stand still for an hour; comfort only makes the days fly quicker. We should not struggle for life, but hold it fast, for existence is a wondrous thing. Oh, in vain — the days vanish. So I 've determined to have nought to say to the hours which pass, but to a time that endures for aye. And only He whom God sends can bring such a time."

Barabbas pressed his face against the stone, and said with comfortable conviction: "We 've only the life we have; there 's no other."

"If it was as you say," returned Dismas, "we must make this one life great — "

"If there 's no life to come," said Barabbas,"we must live this one out. That is nature, and to deny it folly. No, I will enjoy my life. Enjoyment is a duty."

"That is what bad men think," said Dismas.

"There are no bad men," exclaimed Barabbas, "and no good men either. Friend, look at the lamb, he harms no one; he would rather be torn to pieces by the lion than tear the lion to pieces himself. Is he good, therefore ? No, only weak. And the lion who kills and eats the lamb ? Is he bad, therefore ? No, only strong. And so it is his right to destroy the weak. Strength is the only virtue, and the only good deed is to exterminate the weak."

When he made an end of speaking, the other turned his face towards him, and said: "What extraordinary words are those ? I never heard such talk before. In whose heart were such ideas born ?"

"They were not born in the heart," said Barabbas. "The heart is dumb. Dismas, if I must dwell in desert

caves and do nothing, I must search out and inquire. I break stones in pieces and search. I pull the corpses of animals and men to pieces and inquire. And I find that things are not as the old writings tell us. There 's only one Messiah: the truth. Man is an animal like any of the lower creatures — that is the truth. Ha, ha, ha!"

A shudder went through Dismas's body. How he disliked this man! And yet, on account of his companion's strong will, and through the habit of years, he could not free himself. He had often fled away from him, but had always come back. Now he stood up, lifted his arms to heaven, and exclaimed: "Oh, Lord, in the holy heights, save me!"

"Invoke the stars," said Barabbas, with a scornful laugh. "You 'll be right then. They know nothing of you and your God. They 're made of common dust. They themselves, and all the beings on them, live in the same base struggle as does our earth and everything on it. An enormous dust-heap, swarming with vermin, that 's all."

Dismas sat on his stone with folded hands, pale as a corpse.

"Barabbas, my comrade," he said at last, "it is your bad angel that speaks."

"Why don't you praise him, Dismas? Why don't you shout for joy? My message has redeemed you. You think because you 've attacked, slain, and plundered unsuspecting travellers that everlasting hell must be your portion. My strong message does away with hell. Do you see that?"

Then the other: "I heard a prophet in the wilderness cry — that a man whom God had damned could be

saved by repentance. Your damnation, Barabbas, never! No Almighty God! Everything a dry, swarming dust-heap, and no escape! Frightful, frightful!"

"Do you know, Dismas, your lamentations don't amuse me?" said the other, supporting himself on his hands and knees like a four-footed beast. "I have a more important matter on hand. I 'm hungry."

Dismas jumped off his stone, and made ready for flight. "If he 's hungry, he 's capable of killing and eating me."

Barabbas had assumed a listening attitude, and his eagle eyes stared out into the desert. A red banner was visible between the rocks and stones; it moved and came nearer. It was a woman's red garment. She rode on an ass, and seen closer, carried a child in her arms. A man, tired out, limped beside her, leading the ass.

"Dismas, there 's some one," whispered Barabbas, grasping the handle of his weapon. "Come, let 's hide behind the stone until they come up."

"You 'll fall on those defenceless folk from an ambush?"

"And you 're going to help me," said Barabbas coolly.

"We 'll take what we need for to-day, no more. I 'll only help you so far, mark that."

The little group came nearer. The man and the ass waded deep in the sand, which in some places lay scantily over the rough stones, and in others had drifted into high heaps. The guide was leading the animal quickly, for during this sunless day he had lost his bearings, but said nothing about it, in order not to make his wife

anxious. His eyes sought the right road. They ought to reach the oasis of Descheme that day. Now he saw two men standing on blocks of stone which reached up into the sky.

"Praised be God!" said Joseph of Nazareth, "these men will put me right."

Before he had time to frame his question, they quickly descended. One seized the ass's bridle, the other grasped Joseph's arm, and said: "Give us what you have with you."

The pale woman on the ass sent an imploring glance to heaven. The little child in her lap looked straight out of his clear eyes, and was not afraid.

"If you 've bread with you, give it us," said Dismas, who was holding the ass.

"Fool!" shouted Barabbas of the snub nose, "everything they have belongs to us. Whether we will give anything, that 's the question. I will give you the most precious thing — life. Such a beautiful woman without life would be a horror."

Dismas reached at the sack.

"Why are you doing that, brother?" said Barabbas. "We 'll lead them to our castle. The simoon may be blowing up. There they 'll have shelter for the night."

He tore the bridle from Dismas's hand, and led the ass bearing the mother and child down between the stones to the cave. Joseph saw the men's weapons, and followed gloomily.

When the shades of evening fell, and the desert was shut out and the sky dark, when the blocks of stone and the cone-shaped rocks resembled black monsters, the

wanderers were settled in the depths of the cave. The ass lay in front of it sleeping, his big head resting on the sand. Near by lurked the robbers, and ate their plunder.

"Now we 'll share our guests in brotherly fashion," said Barabbas. "You shall have the old man and the child."

"They are father, mother, and child," replied Dismas; "they belong together, we will protect them."

"Brother," said Barabbas, who was in high good humour at the ease of the capture, "your dice. We 'll throw for them. First, for the ass."

"Right Barabbas."

He threw the eight-cornered stone with the black marks, and it fell on his outspread cloak. The ass was his.

"Now for the father and son!"

"Right, Barabbas,"

The dice fell. Barabbas rejoiced. Dismas was winner.

"A third time for the woman!"

"Right, Barabbas."

He threw the dice; they fell on his cloak.

"What is that ? The dice have no marks! Dismas, stop this joke! You 've changed the dice."

When he took them up in his hand the black marks were there again all right. They threw a second and a third time. As before the dice had no marks when they fell.

"What does it mean, Dismas ? The dice are blind."

"I think it 's you who are blind, Barabbas," laughed Dismas. "Here, drink these drops, and then lie down and sleep."

The strong man soon rolled on to the sand beside the ass, and snored loudly.

Then Dismas crawled into the cave and woke the

strangers, in order to get them away from the libertine. For he dared not venture a trial of strength with Barabbas. He had some trouble with Joseph, but at last they were beneath the starry sky, Mary and the child on the ass, Joseph leading it. Dismas walked in front in order to show them the way. They went slowly through the darkness; no one spoke a word. Dismas was sunk in thought. Past days, when he had rested like this child in his mother's arms and his father had led them over the Arabian desert, rose before him. Many a holy saying of the prophets had echoed through his robber life and would not be silenced.

After they had waded through the sand and clambered over the rocks for hours, a golden band of light shone in the east. The bushes and trees of the oasis of Descheme stood out against it.

Here Dismas left the wanderers to their safe road, in order to return to the cave. When he turned back with good wishes for the rest of their journey, he was met by a look from the child's shining eyes. The beaming glance terrified him with the terror of wonderment. Never before had child or man looked at him with look so grateful, so glowing, so loving as this boy, his pretty curly head turned towards him, his hands stretched out in form of a cross, as if he wished to embrace him. Dismas's limbs trembled as if a flash of lightning had fallen at his side, and yet it was only a child's eyes. Holding his head with both hands, he fled, without knowing why he fled, for he would rather have fallen on his knees before the wondrous child. But something like a judgment seemed to thrust him forth, back into the horror of the desert.

For three days our fugitives rested in the oasis. Mary liked to sit on the grass under an olive-tree near the spring, and let the boy stretch his little soft arms to pluck a flower. He reached it, but did not break it from its stem; he only stroked it with his soft fingers.

And when the child fell asleep in the flowers, his mother kneeled before him and looked at him. And she gazed and gazed at him, and could not turn her face from him. Then she bent down and took one little plump, soft hand and shut it into hers so that only the finger-tips could be seen, and she lifted them to her mouth and kissed them, and could not cease kissing the white, childish hands, the tears running down her cheeks the while. And with her large dark eyes she looked out into the empty air — afraid of pursuers.

Joseph walked up and down near at hand between the trees and shrubs, but always kept mother and child in view. He was gathering dates for their further travels.

And now new faces rise before me as they wander farther into the barren desert, swept by the simoon, parched by the rays of the sun. Mary is full of peace, and wraps the child in her cloak so that he rests like a pearl in its shell. He nestles against her warm breast and sucks his fill. Whenever Joseph begins to be afraid, he feels the angel's wing fanning his face. And then he is full of courage and leads his loved ones past hissing snakes and roaring lions.

After many days they reached a fertile valley lying between rocky hills; a clear stream flowed through it. They rested under a hedge of thorns, and looked at a terribly wild mountain that rose high above the rest. It was bare

and rocky from top to bottom, and deep clefts divided it in its whole length, so that the mountain seemed to be formed of upright blocks of stone, which looked like the fingers of two giant hands placed one on the other. A hermit was feeding his goat in the meadow, and Joseph went up to him and asked the name of the remarkable mountain.

"You are travelling through the district, and you don't know the mountain?" said the hermit. "If you are a Jew, incline your face to the earth and kiss it. It is the spot where eternity floated down from Sinai."

"That — the Mountain of the Law?"

"See how it stretches forth its fingers swearing, As true as God lives!"

Joseph bowed down and kissed the ground. Mary looked at the stony mountain with a thrill of awe. Little Jesus slept in the shade of the thorn-bush. The threatening rock and the lovely child. There dark menaces, and here — ?

Joseph tried to picture to himself the scene when Moses, on the summit of the mountain, received the tables of stone from Jehovah. Then a cloud slowly covered the mountain top as if to veil the secret. Joseph was ashamed of his presumption and kept silence. Before he departed he cut a bough from the thorn-bush and pulled off the leaves and twigs, so that it formed a pilgrim's staff for the rest of the journey. They were always meeting new dangers. And one day a hunter of the desert came running after them. They were not frightened of his tiger skin, but of what he had to tell them. If they had come from Judæa with their boy, they had better

hasten into the land of Egypt, for Herod's men were on their track. So they had no rest until at last they came to the land of the Pharaohs. But one day they found themselves not on its frontier, but on the seashore. They were dumb with astonishment. There lay the sea, its waves dashing against the black, jagged cliffs, and beyond them was a smooth, level plain as far as the eye could see.

Once in the past fugitives had stood on the other side of the sea, their enemies behind them. And Joseph lifted up his arms and called upon the God of his forefathers to divide the waters of the sea once again and make a passage for them. Belief in the God of ancestors is strong. He appealed also to his ancestors themselves and entreated them to come to his assistance, for are we not one with them and strong in the same faith ? But the sea lay in calm repose and divided not. Six horsemen came riding over the sand, shouting for joy at the thought of their reward, when they saw those they had so long pursued standing by the water, unable to proceed farther. Quickly they approached the shore, and were about to let fly the stones from their slings against the couple who had the little King of the Jews with them, when they saw the fugitives descend the wave-washed cliffs and go out upon the surface of the sea. The man led the ass on which sat the woman with the child, and just as they had passed over the sand of the desert, with even steps, they passed over the waters of the sea.

Their pursuers rode after them in blind rage, urged their horses into the sea, and were the first to reach, not Egypt, but the other world.

CHAPTER SIX

The family of the poor carpenter from Nazareth stood on the soil of ancient Egypt. How had they crossed the sea? Joseph thought in a fishing boat, but it had all happened as in a dream. He opened his eyes, and sought the mountains of Nazareth, and saw the dark grove of palm-trees with their bare trunks and sword-shaped leaves, and he saw the gate flanked by enormous stone figures which, lying on their bellies, stretched out two paws in front of them and lifted huge human heads high in the air. He saw the triangular form of the pyramids rise against the yellow background. Strange odours filled the air, as well as shrill noises made by fantastic figures, and every sound struck hard and sharp on the ear. Joseph's heart was heavy. His home was abandoned, and they were in a strange land in which they must certainly be lost.

Mary, who was always outwardly calm, but inwardly, bound up passionately in the child, looked at Joseph's stick, and said: "Joseph, it is a nice thought of yours to deck your staff with a flower in token of our safe arrival." Then Joseph looked at his stick and marvelled. For from the branch which he had cut at Sinai there sprouted a living, snow-white lily. Oh, Joseph, 't is the flower of purity! But what was the use of all the flowers in the

world when he was so full of care? He lifted the child in his arms, and when he looked at his sunny countenance the shadows were dispersed. But they experienced shadows enough in the land of the sun, where men had built a splendid temple to the sun-god like that which the Israelites at home had built to the great Jehovah.

Things did not go very well with these poor Jews during the long years they remained in this land. They did not understand the language; but their simple, kindly character and their readiness to be of use told in their favour. In that treeless land carpentry was at a discount. They built themselves a hut out of reeds and mud on the bank of the Nile near the royal city of Memphis, but in such a building the carpenter's skill did not shine. Still it was better than the dwellings of other poor people by the riverside. Joseph though of fishing for a livelihood; but the fish-basket that he wove was so successful that the neighbours supplied him with food so that he might make such baskets for them. And soon people came from the town to buy his baskets, and when he carried his wares to market, he got rid of them all on the way. So basket-making became his trade, and he thought how once the little Moses was saved in a basket on the Nile. And just as his work was liked, so also did Mary and himself win affection, and they confessed that life went better on the banks of the Nile than in poor little Nazareth, for veritably there were fleshpots in Egypt. If only they could have crushed their heart's longing for home!

When the little Jesus began to walk, the mothers who

were their neighbours wished him to make friends with their children and play with them. But the boy was reserved and awkward with strangers. He preferred to wander alone at evening-time beside the stream and gaze at the big lotus flowers growing out of the mud, and at the crocodiles which sometimes crawled out of the water, and lifting their heads towards the sky, opened their great jaws as if they would drink in the sunshine. He often remained out longer than he ought, and came back with glowing cheeks, excited by some pleasure about which he said nothing. When he had eaten his figs or dates, and lay in his little bed, his father and mother sat close by, and spoke of the land of their fathers, or told ancient tales of their ancestors until he fell asleep. Joseph instructed the boy in the Jewish writings; but is was soon apparent that Joseph was the pupil, for what he read with difficulty from the roll, little Jesus spoke out spontaneously from his innermost soul. So he grew into a slender, delicate stripling, learned the foreign tongue, marked the customs, and followed them so far as they pleased him. There was much in him that he did not owe to education; although he said little, his mother observed it. And once she asked Joseph: "Tell me, are other children like our Jesus?"

He answered: "So far as I know them — he is different."

One day, when Jesus was a little older, something happened. Joseph had gone with the boy to the place where the boats land, in order to offer his baskets for sale. There was a stir among the people: soldiers in brilliant uniforms and carrying long spears marched along;

then came two heralds blowing their horns as if they would split the air with their sharp tones; and behind came six black slaves drawing a golden chariot in which sat Pharaoh. He was a pale man with piercing eyes, dressed in costly robes, a sparkling coronet on his black, twisted hair. The people shouted joyfully, but he heeded them not; he leaned back wearily on his cushions. But all at once he lifted his head a little: a boy in the crowd, the stranger basket-maker's little son, attracted his attention. Whether it was his beauty or something unusual about him that struck him, we cannot say, but he ordered the carriage to be stopped, and the child to be brought to him.

Joseph humbly came forward with the boy, crossed his hands on his breast, and made a deep obeisance.

"That is your son?" said the king in his own language.

Joseph bowed affirmatively.

"You are a Jew! Will you sell me the boy?" asked Pharaoh.

And then Joseph: "Pharaoh! although I am a descendant of Jacob, whose sons sold their brother Joseph into Egypt, I do not deserve your irony. We are poor people, but the child is our most cherished possession."

"I only spoke in kindness about the selling," said the king. "You are my subjects, and the boy is my property. Take him, Hamar."

The servant was ready to put his hand on the little boy, who stood by quietly and looked resolutely at the king. Joseph fell on his knees and respectfully represented that he and his family were not Egyptian subjects, but

lived there as strangers, and implored the almighty Pharaoh to allow him the rights of hospitality.

"I know nothing about all that, my good man," said the king. Then, catching sight of the boy's angry face, he laughed. "Meseems, my young Jew, that you would crush me to powder. Let me live a little longer in this pleasant land of Egypt. I shall not harm you. You are much too beautiful a child for that." He stopped, and then continued in a different tone: "Wait, and look more closely at Pharaoh, and see if he is really so terribly wicked, and whether it would be so dreadful to live in his palace and hand him the goblet when he is thirsty. Well? Be assured, old man, I shall do you no violence. Boy, you shall come to my court of your own free will, you shall share the education and instruction of the children of my nobles; only sometimes I shall have you with me, you fine young gazelle. Now go home with your father. To-morrow I will send and ask, mark you — only ask, not command. He who is tired of plundered booty knows how to value a free gift. You hear what I say?"

When the crowd heard Pharaoh speak to these poor people with such unwonted kindness, the like of which they had never heard before, they uttered mad shouts of joy. As the king proceeded on his way in his two-wheeled golden chariot, a long array of soldiers, cymbal players, and dancing girls following behind, the palm-groves resounded with the cries of the people. Joseph fled with the boy down narrow streets so as to avoid the crowd that wanted to press round him and look at and pet Pharaoh's little favourite.

The same evening an anxious council was held

in the little hut. The boy, Jesus, was drawn to Pharaoh without saying why. They were terrified about it. The two working people had no idea that their life was becoming too narrow for his young soul, that he wanted to fortify himself with the knowledge to be obtained from the papyrus rolls of the ancient men of wisdom, with the intellectual products of the land of the Pharaohs. And still less did they imagine that a deeper reason led their boy to desire to learn something of life in the world.

Joseph admitted that the manuscripts in the royal collection counted for something. But Mary put little trust in the writings, and still less in Pharaoh.

"We 've had," she said, "a painful experience of the good intentions of kings. Having escaped the violence of Herod with difficulty, are we to submit to that of Pharaoh? They all play the same game, only in a different way. What Jerusalem could not accomplish by force, Memphis will accomplish by cunning."

Joseph said: "My dear wife, you are not naturally so mistrustful. Yet after what we have gone through it is no wonder. This legend of a young king of the Jews has been a real fatality to us. Whoever started it can never answer for all the woes it brings."

"Let us leave that to the Lord, Joseph, and do what it is ours to do."

When Joseph was alone with her he said: "It seems to me, Mary, that you believe our Jesus is destined for great things. But you must remember that a basket-maker's hut is not exactly the right place for that. He would have a better chance at Pharaoh's court — like Moses. And we know that the King of Egypt is no friend of Herod.

No, that is not his line; he really wishes well to the child, and no one can better understand that than ourselves. Did he not say that our darling should be treated like the children of the nobles?"

In the end she decided to do what was best for the child. He was past ten years old, and if he wished to go from the mud hut to the palace, well, she would not forbid it.

Jesus heard her words. "Mother," he said, and stood in front of her, "I do not wish to go from the mud hut to the palace, but I want to see the world and men and how they live, I am not abandoning my parents to go to Pharaoh — although I go, I remain here with you."

"You remain with us," said his mother, "and yet I see that even now you are no longer here."

But she would not let him know how it was with her. He should not see her weep. She would not spoil his pleasure. And then they discovered that after all he was not going very far away, only from the Nile to the town, and that Pharaoh had promised him liberty; he could visit his parents, and return to them whenever he so wished. But he would no longer be the same child who went from them. Mary reflected that that was the usual case with mother and son; the youth gave himself up more and more to strangers, and less and less of him remained to his mother. There remained to her the memory that she had borne him in pain, that she had nourished him with her life; she had a claim on him more sacred and everlasting than any other could have. But gradually and inevitably he separated himself from his mother, and what she would do for him, and give him, and be to him,

he kindly but decidedly set aside. She must even give him her prayerful blessing in secret; she hardly dared to touch his head with her trembling hand.

Next day at noon a royal litter stood before the hut. Two slaves were the bearers, one of whom was old and feeble. When Mary saw the litter she exclaimed that she would not allow her child to lie on so soft a couch. The boy smiled a little, so that two dimples appeared on his rosy cheeks, and said:

"Why, mother, do you think I would ride on those cushions? Now, let the sick slave get in, and I will take his place."

But the leader of the little procession was not agreeable. The boy could do as he liked, stay, or go with them.

"I shall stay," said Jesus, "and go to Pharaoh when I please." The litter returned empty to the palace.

The next day the boy made up his mind to go. His parents accompanied him through the palm-grove to the town. He walked between father and mother in his humble garb, and Joseph gave him good advice the while. Mary was silent and invoked the heavenly powers to protect her child. Only the boy was admitted through the gateway of the palace; father and mother remained behind and looked fearfully after their Jesus, who turned round to wave to them. His face was glad, and that comforted the mother. The father thought it incomprehensible that a child could so cheerfully and heedlessly part from the only creatures who cared for him; but he kept his thought to himself.

The boy felt curiosity, satisfaction, and repugnance all at the same time, when he gave himself into the hands of

the servants, who led him to a refreshing bath, anointed him with sweet-smelling oil, and clad him in a silken garment. But he desired to learn what life in the royal palace was like. And gradually its splendour began to enfold him. The Arabian tales which his father loved to tell him contained marvels and splendours, but nothing to be compared with the magnificence and brilliance that now assailed his senses. Marble staircases as broad as streets, halls as lofty as temples, marble pillars, brilliantly painted domes. The sun came through the windows in every colour there is, and was reflected red, blue, green, and gold by the shining walls. But more fairy-like were the nights, when thousands of lamps burned in the halls, a forest of candelabra shone like a conflagration kept within bounds; when the courtiers seemed to sink into the carpets and divans and silken and down coverlets; when the sweet-smelling incense rose from the golden censers and intoxicated the brain; when a hundred servants made ready the banquet of indescribable luxury, and carried it in silver dishes, alabaster bowls, and crystal goblets; when youths and maidens, with arms entwined, crowned each other with wreaths of roses; when the fanfares sounded, and the cymbals clashed, and song gushed from maidens' throats; and when at length Pharaoh entered in flowing purple robes adorned with a thousand sparkling diamond stars — on his head an indented coronet, shining like carbuncle — the god! the sun-god! On all this our boy from the Nile hut looked as at something wonderful that had nothing to do with him. A fan of shimmering peacocks' feathers was put into his hand. Other boys had similar fans, and with

half-bared limbs stood close to the guests and fanned them into coolness. Young Jesus was to do that for Pharaoh, but he did not do it, and sat on the floor and never grew weary of looking at Pharaoh's pale face. The king answered his gaze kindly: "I think that is the proud youth from the Nile, who does not desire to sit at the feet of Pharaoh."

"He shall sit at the right hand of God," sang the choir. Slowly, with the air of an irritated lion, the king turned his head in order to see what stupid choirmaster mingled Hebrew verses with the hymn of Osiris. Then ensued noise and confusion. The windows, behind which was the darkness, shone with a red light. The people had assembled before the palace with torches in order to do homage to Pharaoh, the son of Light. The king looked annoyed. Such homage was repeated every new moon — he desired it, and yet it bored him. He beckoned to the cup-bearers, he wanted a goblet of wine. That brought the blood to his cheeks, and the light to his eyes. He joined in the hymn of praise to Osiris, and his whole form glowed with strength and gladness.

When the quiet night succeeded the luxurious day, so still was it that the lapping of the waves of the Nile might be heard. Jesus lay on a curtained couch of down, and could not sleep. How well he had slept in the hut by the Nile! He was hot and rose and looked out of the window. The stars sparkled like tiny suns. He lay down again, prayed to his Father, and fell asleep. The next day, when the feast was over, he would find the rooms in which the old writings were kept, and the teachers who would instruct him. But it was not like the feast that

comes to an end; it was repeated every day at the king's court.

It happened one night that the slaves stole around and woke each other and whispered. Jesus became aware of the subdued noise, sat up, and asked the cause. One approached him and whispered, "Pharaoh weeps!" Like a mysterious breath of wind it went through the palace, "Pharaoh weeps!" Then all was still again, and the dreaming night lay over everything.

Jesus did not lie down again on the soft cushions, he rested on the cool floor and thought. The king weeps! Arabia and India, Greece and Rome have sent their costliest treasures to Memphis, Phœnician ships cruise off the coasts of Gaul, Albion, and Germany in order to obtain treasure for the great Pharaoh. His people surround him day after day with homage, his life is at its prime. And he weeps? Was it not perhaps that he sobbed in his dreams, or it may be laughed? But the watchers think he weeps.

CHAPTER SEVEN

And the days passed by. As the king had said, the boy was free. But he stayed on at the palace because he hoped one day to find the room in which the manuscripts were kept. He often strolled through the town and the palm-grove down to the river to see his parents. Thousands of slaves were working at the sluices of the stream which fertilized the land. The overseer scourged them lustily, so that many of them fell down exhausted and even dying. Jesus looked on and denounced such barbarity, until he, too, received a blow. Then he went out to the Pyramids where the Pharaohs slept, and listened if they were not weeping. He went into the Temple of Osiris and looked at the monster idols, fat soulless, ugly, between the rounded pillars. He searched the palace untiringly for the hall in which the writings were kept, and at last he came upon it. But it was closed: its custodians were hunting jackals and tigers in the desert. They found it dark and dreary there among the great minds of old; the splendour and luxury of the court did not penetrate to the hall of writings.

Then nights came again when whispers ran through halls, "Pharaoh weeps." And the reason, too, was whispered. He had caused the woman he loved best to be

strangled, and now the astrologers declared that she was innocent. One day the king lay on his couch and desired that the boy from the Nile should be summoned to fan him. As the king was sick, Jesus agreed to go. Pharaoh was ill-humoured and impatient, neither fan nor fanning was right, and when the boy left off that was not right either.

Then Jesus said suddenly: "Pharaoh, you are sick?"

The king stared at him in astonishment. A page dare to open his mouth and speak to the Son of Light! When, however, he saw the sad, sincere expression of sympathy in the boy's countenance he became calmer, and said: "Yes, my boy, I am sick."

"King," said Jesus, "I know what is the matter with you."

"You know!"

"You keep shadows within and light without. Reverse it."

Directly the boy had said that Pharaoh got up, thinner and taller than he usually appeared to be, and haughtily pointed to the door, an angry light in his eyes.

The boy went out quietly, and did not look back.

But his words were not forgotten. In the noise and tumult of the daytime Pharaoh did not hear them; in the night, when all the brilliance was extinguished and only the miserable and unhappy waked, he heard softly echoed from wall to wall of his chamber, "Reverse it! Bring the light inside!"

Shortly before that time Jesus had discovered an aged scholar who dwelt outside the gate of Thebes, in a vaulted cave at the foot of the Pyramid. He would have

nothing to do with any living thing except a goat of the desert which furnished him with milk. And as he kept always within the darkness of the vault, bending over endless hieroglyphics on half-decomposed slabs of stone, on excavated household vessels, and papyrus rolls, the goat likewise never saw the sun. Both were contented with the food brought them daily by an old fellah. The hermit was one who had surely reversed things—shadow without and light within. When Pharaoh dismissed Jesus, he sought the learned cave-dweller in order to find wisdom. At first the old man would not let him come in. What had young blood to do with wisdom?

"My son, first grow old, and then come and seek wisdom in the old writings."

The boy answered: "Do you give wisdom only for dying? I want it for living."

Then the old man let him in.

Jesus now visited the wise man every day and listened to his teachings about the world and life, and also about eternal life. The hermit spoke of the transmigration of souls, how in the course of ages souls must pass through all beings, live through all the circles of existence, according as their conduct led them upwards to the gods, or downwards to the worms in the mud. Therefore we should love the animals which the souls of men may inhabit. He spoke with deep awe of the serpent Kebados, and of the sublime Apis in the Temple of Memphis. He lost himself in all the depths and shoals of thought, verified everything by the hieroglyphics, and declared it to be scientific truth. So that the man who lived in the dark discoursed to the boy on light. He spoke of the all-holy

sun-god Osiris who created everything and destroyed everything — the great, the adorable Osiris by whose eye every creature was absorbed. Then he would again solemnly and mysteriously murmur incomprehensible formulæ, and the eager boy grew weary. Here, too, something evidently had to be reversed. So thinking, he went quietly forth and left the little gate open. When the old man looked up at him, there he was in the open air pasturing the goat, who, delighted at her liberty, was capering round on the grass.

"Why do you not show your reverence for truth?" he said, reprovingly.

And Jesus: "Don't you see that I am proving my reverence for your teaching. You say: We must love animals. Therefore I led the goat out into the open air, that she may feed on the fragrant grass. You say that we should kindle our eye at that of the sun-god, therefore I went out with the goat from the dark vault into the bright sunlight."

"You must learn to understand the writings."

"I want to know living creatures."

The old man looked at the boy with an air of vexation. "Tell me, you bold son of man, under what sign of the zodiac were you born?"

"Under that of the ox and the ass," answered the boy Jesus.

The man of learning immediately hurried into his cave, lighted his lamp, and consulted his hieroglyphics. Under the ox and the ass — he grew afraid. Away with Libra, away with Libra! He investigated yet again. It stood written on the stone and in the roll. He went out

again, and looked at the boy, but differently from before, uneasily, in great excitement.

"Listen, boy, I 've cast your horoscope."

"What is it?"

"By the ancient and sacred signs I 've read your fate. Knowing under what sign of the zodiac and under which stars you were born, I can enlighten you as to the fate you go to meet so callously. Do you desire to know it?"

"If I desire to know it, I will ask my Father."

"Is your father an astrologer?"

"He guides the stars in their courses."

"He guides the stars in their courses? What do you mean? You are a fool, a godless fool. You will learn what terrors await you. This arrogance is the beginning. His father guides the stars in their courses indeed!"

CHAPTER EIGHT

News came from Judæa that King Herod was dead. It was also reported that his successor, called Herod the younger, was of milder temperament and a true friend of his people. So Joseph considered that the time was now come when he might return to his native land with his wife and his tall, slender son. His basket-making, through industry and thrift, had, almost without his noticing it, put so much money into his pocket that he was able to treat with a Phœnician merchant regarding the journey home. For they would not go back across the desert: Joseph wanted to show his family the sea. He took willow twigs with him in order to have something to do during the voyage. Mary occupied herself in repairing and making clothes, so that she might be nicely dressed when she arrived home. The other passengers who were in the big ship were glad of the idleness, and amused themselves in all sorts of ways. Jesus often joined them, and rejoiced with those who were glad. But when the amusement degenerated into extravagance and shamelessness, he retired to the cabin, or looked at the wide expanse of waters.

One moonlight night when they were on the high seas, a storm sprang up. The ship's keel was lifted high at one

moment only to dip low the next, so that the waves broke over the deck; bundles and chests were thrown about, and a salt stream struck the travellers' faces. The rigging broke away from the masts, and fluttered loosely in the air out into the dark sea which heaved endlessly in mountains of foam, and threatened to engulf the groaning ship. The people were mad with terror and anguish, and, reeling and staggering, sought refuge in every corner in order to avoid the falling beams and splinters. Joseph and Mary looked for Jesus, and found him quietly asleep on a bench. The storm thundered over his head, the masts cracked, but he slept peacefully. Mary bent over him, and climbed on to the bench so that they might not be hurled apart. She would let him sleep on, what could a mother's love do more ? But Joseph thought it time to be prepared, and so they woke him. He stood on the deck and looked out into the wild confusion. He saw the moon fly from one wall of mist to the other, he saw dark monsters shoot up from the roaring abyss, and throw themselves on the ship with a crashing noise, and turn it on its side so that the masts almost touched the surface of the water, while birds of prey hovered above. The ship heaved from its inmost recesses, and cracked from end to end as if it would burst. Jesus pale-faced, his eyes sparkling with delight, held on to the railing. Joseph and Mary tried to protect him. He thrust them back, and without ceasing to gaze at the awful splendour, said: "Let me alone! Don't you see that I 'm with my Father ?"

It is written of him that he is the only man who had no father on earth, and so he sought and found Him in heaven.

Others who saw the youth that night became almost calm in spite of their terror. If he is not afraid for his young life, is ours so much more valuable? And then, whether to conquer or to fail, they went to work with more courage to steer the ship, to mend the tackle with tow, to bale out the water, until gradually the storm subsided. When day dawned Jesus was still gazing with delight at the open sea, where he had watched the struggle of winds and waves, of light and darkness. At last he had found it — light both within and without! The helmsman blew his horn, and announced, "Land in sight!" Far away over the dark-green water shone the cliffs of Joppa.

When the ship was safely steered through the high cliffs into the harbour, our family landed in order to journey thence to Jerusalem on foot. For it was the time of the Passover, and it was many years since Joseph had celebrated it in Solomon's Temple. The feast — a memorial of the deliverance from Egypt — had now a double meaning for him. So he wished to make this *détour* to the royal city on his way to his native Galilee, and especially that, after their sojourn in the land of the heathen, he might introduce Jesus to the public worship of the chosen people. Joseph and Mary clasped each other's hands in quiet joy when they were once again journeying through their native land, breathing its fresh air, seeing the well known plants and creatures, hearing the familiar tongue. Jesus remained calm. If he found any childish memories there, they would be of the king who had persecuted him. He could regard the land with calm impartiality. And when he saw his parents so glad

to be at home again, he thought how strange it was that lifeless earth should have so much power over the heart. Does not the Heavenly Father hold the whole earth in his hand? Does not man carry his home within his own bosom?

Their possessions were tied on to the back of a camel, and they trudged cheerfully after it. Joseph carried an axe at his waist in order to defend them from attacks, but he only had occasion to try it on the blocks of wood that lay in the road, which he liked to hack at a little if they were good timber. The nearer they approached the capital the more animated the stony roads became. Pilgrims who were proceeding to the great festival in the holy place streamed along the paths. After sunset on the second day, our travellers found themselves at an inn in Jerusalem. Joseph could afford to be more independent than he had been twelve years back — he had money in his pocket! Their first walk was to the Temple. They hastened their steps when passing Herod's palace.

The Temple stood in wondrous splendour. All sorts of people filled the forecourt, hurrying, pushing, and shouting, pressing forward through the lines of pillars into the Holy Place, and thence into the Holy of Holies, where the ark of the covenant stood, flanked by golden candelabra. Every fifth man wore the robes of a rabbi, and was thus sure of his place in the Temple as one learned in the law. Pharisees and Sadducees, two hostile parties in the interpretation of the law, talked together of tithes and tribute, or entered on lively disputes over the laws of the Scriptures, a subject on which they never agreed. Joseph and Mary did not observe that others were quar-

relling; they humbly obeyed the rules, and stood in a niche of the Holy Place and prayed. But Jesus stood by the pillars and listened to the disputants with astonishment.

The next day they inspected the city as far as the crowds rendered it possible. Joseph wished to visit the grave of his noble ancestor, and pushed through the crowds that filled the dark, narrow streets, noisy with buyers and sellers, donkey-drivers, porters, shouting rabbis, and an endless stream of pilgrims. When they reached David's tomb Jesus was not with them. Joseph thought that he had remained behind in the crowd, and, feeling quite easy about him, paid his devotions at the tomb of his royal ancestor. When they returned to the inn, where they thought to find Jesus, he was not there; time passed, and he did not come. Some one said he had joined a party of pilgrims going to Galilee, because he thought that his parents had already set out. "How could he think that?" exclaimed Joseph. "As if we should go without him!"

They hurried off to fetch their son, but when they came up with the pilgrims, Jesus was not there, nothing was known of him, and his parents returned to the town. They sought him there for two whole days. They visited every quarter of the city, searched all the public buildings, inquired of every curator, asked at the strangers' office, questioned all the shopkeepers about the tall boy with pale face, brown hair, and an Egyptian fez on his head. But no one had seen him. They returned to the inn, fully expecting to find him there. But there was no sign of him. Mary, who was almost fainting with

anxiety, declared that he must have fallen into the hands of Herod. Joseph comforted her, though he was himself in sad need of consolation.

"Poor mother," he said, drawing her head down on his breast, "let us go and place our trouble before the Lord."

And when they had gone up into the temple, there, among the scholars and the men learned in the law they found Jesus. The youth sat among the grey-bearded rabbis, and carried on a lively conversation with them, so that his cheeks glowed and his eyes shone. Judgment had to be pronounced on a serious case of trangression of the law. A man in Jerusalem had baked bread on the Sabbath, because his neighbour had been unable to lend him the oven the day before. The Pharisees met together, and eagerly brought forward a crowd of statutes regarding the culpability of the trangressor. Young Jesus listened attentively for a while, and then suddenly stepped out of the crowd. Placing himself in front of the learned men, he asked: "Rabbis, ought a man to do good on the Sabbath or not?"

They did not know at first whether to honour this bold young man with an answer. But there is a precept in the law which declares that every inquirer must be answered, so one of them said curtly and roughly: "Of course a man should do good."

Jesus inquired further: "Is life a good thing or not?"

"As it is the gift of God, it is a good thing."

"Should a man then preserve life or harm it on the Sabbath?"

The wise men were silent, for they would have been

compelled to acknowledge that life must be preserved on the Sabbath, and their accusation of the man who had baked bread for his food would have fallen to the ground.

Jesus walked quickly up the steps to the table, and said: "Rabbis, if a sheep fell into a brook on the Sabbath, would you leave it there till the next day? You would not first think: To-day is the Sabbath day, but you would pull it out before it was drowned. Which is of greater value, a sheep or a man? If a sick man comes on the Sabbath day, and needs help, it is given him at once. And if you have a splinter in your flesh, no one asks if it is the Sabbath; the splinter must be taken out. But you come with your laws against a poor man who was obliged to prepare his food on the Sabbath, and you imagine yourselves better than he is. No, that will not do. The intention must decide. If any one bakes bread on the Sabbath, I should say to him: 'Is it for your own good or for gain?' In the first case you are acting rightly, in the last you desecrate the Sabbath."

As they now did not know what to say, they decided that the youth was too insignificant for them to dispute with.

Jesus, still excited, came down and joined the crowd, where his mother was wringing her hands over the boldness with which her son had spoken to the elders and the wise men. She stretched her arms towards him. "Child! child! What are you doing here? Why treat us so? What we have not suffered on your behalf! We have sought you for three whole days in the greatest anxiety."

Then Jesus said: "Why did you seek me? He who has a task to do, cannot always stay with his own

people. I have been about my Heavenly Father's business."

"Where were you all the time?"

He did not answer. Others might have told how he stood between the pillars listening to the discussions of the Rabbis until he could keep silence no longer.

Joseph said to him with some severity: "If you are learned enough to interpret the Scriptures to those honourable men, you must know the fourth commandment: 'Honour thy father and thy mother that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.'"

Jesus said nothing.

"And now, my son, we will betake ourselves to that land."

And so they set out on the last stage of their journey. It was hard walking over the vineyards of Judæa and Samaria, and Mary, when they were quite near home, asked if she should ever see Nazareth again. Jesus marched the distance, so to speak, twice, for he was never tired of turning aside to gather dates, currants. and figs, or to fetch a pitcher of water in order that his parents might quench their thirst. So they went slowly over the rocky land, and when the mule-path led to an eminence over which flat stones lay scattered, and which was thickly sown with stumpy shrubs, the fertile plain of Israel lay before them. It was surrounded by wooded hills. White villages were scattered about its surface, and shining rivers wound through it. Opposite, one range of mountains showed behind the other, and the highest lifted their snowy peaks into the blue sky.

Joseph let fall the camel's guiding rein and his staff, extended his arms and exclaimed: "Praise the Lord, oh my soul!" For Galilee, his native place, lay before him.

When they saw the little town of Nazareth nestling in a bend of the hills — ah! how small the place was, and how peaceful amid the green hills !— Mary wept for joy.

CHAPTER NINE

The inhabitants of Nazareth were not a little astonished to see Joseph the carpenter, who had so long disappeared from their midst, walk up the street with his wife and a handsome boy. It was a good thing that they had baggage with them. But Cousin Nathaniel made a very wry face, in which the smile of welcome struggled with the anxiety this unexpected arrival caused him. Cousin Nathaniel had taken possession of, and settled comfortably in the house, regarding himself as the heir. Now he must pack up and go.

Joseph was delighted to see his workshop again, with his vise, bench, yardstick, plane, and saw. The red dyeing vat was also there, and the cord with which the timber was measured before the axe was used on it. Cousin Nathaniel declared that many of the tools belonged to him, until Joseph pointed to the J with which all his things were marked for the sake of order. When the old workman tied on his apron, and for the first time set to work with the plane so that the fine shavings flew whirring about, his blood flowed swiftly for delight, and his eye looked like that of a young man. And so the carpenter began cheerfully to work again, not only in his own shop, but anywhere in the neighbourhood where

building or repairing was required, or tables, chests, or benches were needed. The little property he had bought from Egypt would be increased here, so that when the time came, his son should make a good start in life. Mary helped him with careful and economical housekeeping, and made undergarments and cloaks for the women of Nazareth. Jesus had a room to himself to which he could withdraw when work was over. Joseph hoped, by making him comfortable at home, to counteract the attractions of the outside world. The vine trellises could be clearly seen through the windows of the room, and a hill with olive-trees, and clouds from Lebanon passing over the sky, and the stars that rose in the east. The first gleam of sun, moon, and stars, when they rose, fell into that peaceful chamber. The books of Moses, the Maccabees, the Kings, the Prophets, and Psalmists which Jesus gradually collected in Nazareth, Cana, Nain, and in the villages below round the lake, filled a shelf. The men of Galilee had become indifferent to the works which their forefathers wrote with toil and reverence ; they had had to wait too long for the fulfilment of the prophecies, and began to doubt that a Messiah would ever come to the Jews, so that they were quite pleased to give the parchments to that nice boy of Joseph's. If they wanted to know anything, they had only to ask him, and he explained it so clearly and concisely, and sometimes so impressively, that they never forgot it again. That was much easier than awkwardly searching for themselves, and labouring hard to decipher the words only to be enable to understand them when they had done so.

Many a night, by the light of the moon, did Joseph read in his books. They were the same as those we read to-day when we open the Old Testament. So that it is as if we sat with Jesus on the same school bench. He read of Adam and his sin, of Cain and his murder, of Abraham and his promise, of Noah and the deluge. He read of Jacob and his sons, of Joseph whom his brothers sold into Egypt, and of his fate in that land. And he read of Moses the great lawgiver, of David the shepherd, minstrel and king, and of Solomon's wisdom and of his temple, and of the Prophets who judged the people for their misdeeds, and prophesied the future kingdom. Jesus read the history of his people with a burning heart. He saw how the race had gradually gone from bad to worse. If he had at first rejoiced with all enthusiasm, later on he became angry at the degeneration. Grief made him sleepless, and he peered thoughtfully into the starry heavens, asking: "What will deliver them from this misery?"

The stars were silent. But out of the distance, out of the stillness of eternity, it was proclaimed: I love them so deeply, that I shall send my own Son to make them happy.

By day Joseph took care that the youth should not dream too much. Jesus must learn his trade. He did so willingly but not gladly, for his head was not with his hands, and while he should have joined two beams to make a door-frame, the dark saying of the Prophet sounded in his head: "He is numbered among the transgressors."

"What are you doing there? Is that a door-frame?

It 's a cross!" So Joseph awoke him out of his reverie, and Jesus was terrified to see that he had nailed the pieces of wood crosswise.

"Tell me," said Joseph to the boy, "what are you thinking of ? If you 've any sense in your head use it for your honest work. The simplest handicraft needs it all, and not only a piece here and there. And especially carpentering, which builds people houses, bridges, ships, and yea, temples for Jehovah. You cannot imagine what mischief a bad carpenter may do. You 're thinking of divine things ? Well, work is a divine thing. With work in his hands, man continues the creation of God. People say that you are clever; then let your master see it. You make the tools blunt and the work is not clean and sharp. This can 't go on, child."

Jesus let the lecture pass in silence, and worked far into the night to make the mischief good.

Joseph confided his grief to his wife. Not that the boy would turn out a bad carpenter. If he liked he could succeed in anything. But Joseph was grieved to have to scold his favourite so often. He had to do that to every apprentice.

Mary said: "Joseph, you are quite right to direct him. I am indeed anxious, I observe the child carefully, and I am not satisfied. He is so different, so very different from boys of his age."

"I think, too, that he is different," said Joseph. "We must not forget that from the very beginning it was different with this child. Jehovah understands it; I can't fit it together. He reads too much, and that 's bad for young people."

"And I almost fear he reads the Law in order to criticise it," said Mary.

"He 'll find himself. At his age boys exaggerate in everything." So Joseph consoled himself. He 's a singular boy. Look at him when he plays with other children! The tallest of them all! No, after all, I would n't have him other than he is."

They had talked in sorrow and joy while Jesus was nailing the wood correctly out in the workshop. And when he had gone to bed, Joseph crept into his room, and laid his hand gently on his head.

And so the years went by. Jesus improved in his work, and grew in intelligence, and in cheerfulness. The Sabbath day was all his own. He liked to go up to the hilltop where the sheep were feeding among the stones and the olive-trees, whence he could see the mighty mountains of Lebanon and the wide landscape, partly green and fertile and partly barren, down to the lake. He stood there and thought. He was always friendly with the people he met, or who were employed about him, but he seldom became intimate with them. Occasionally he would join in some athletic exercise with youths from Cana, and in wrestling, strive who could overcome the other. Then his soft brown hair would fly in the wind, his cheeks would glow, and when the game was over, he would return arm-in-arm with his adversary to the valley below. But he preferred to be alone with himself, or with silent nature. Beautiful ideas came springing like lambs in that peaceful place, but there also came thoughts strong as lions. He dreamed. He did not think; thought, as it were lay within himself, and then he spoke out

many a word at which he was himself terrified. Ideas began to shape themselves within him, and before he was aware of it they were clearly spoken by his tongue, as if it was another who spoke for him. And so he came out of the mysterious depths to the light.

He was often challenged to dispute; he never defended himself except by words, but they were so weighty and fiery that people soon left him in peace. If he struck, he knew how to make the injury good. One day when he was going down the defile to the stony moor, a mischievous boy ran up behind him and knocked him down. Jesus quickly picked himself up, and shouted angrily to the boy, "Die!" When he saw the blazing eye, the boy turned deathly pale and began to tremble so that, near to fainting, he had to lean up against the rocky wall. Jesus went up to him, laid his hand on his shoulder and said kindly, "Live!"

No one in the whole countryside had ever seen such an eye as his. Like lightning in anger, in calmer moods like the gleam of dewdrops upon flowers.

CHAPTER TEN

As Jesus gradually grew to manhood he worked at his trade as a master. For Joseph was old and feeble, and could only sit by the bench, overlook the carpenters and tell them what it would be best to do. They had a young apprentice, a near relation, named John, who helped Jesus with the carpentering and building. When they built a cottage in Nazareth, or roofed a house, he was severe and strict with the youth. But when on the Sabbath day they wandered together through the country between the vines, over the meadows with the stones and herds, sometimes through the dark cedar forests to the lower slopes of Lebanon, they said not a word about the work. They watched the animals, the plants, the streams, the heavens and their everlasting lights, and rejoiced exceedingly. Sometimes they assisted poor gardeners and shepherds, and did them trifling services. They taught John to blow the horn, and Jesus sang joyful psalms with a clear voice.

But Joseph's death was approaching.

He lay half-blind on his bed, and asked Mary how she would manage when he was gone. Then he felt with his cold hand for Jesus.

"My son, my son!"

Jesus wiped the dying man's brow with the hem of his garment.

"I had hoped," said Joseph softly, "but it is not to be. I must depart in darkness."

"Father," said Jesus, and tenderly stroked his head.

"It is hard, my child. Stay beside me. I had hoped to see the Messiah and His light. But I must be gathered to my fathers in darkness."

"He will soon come and lead you to paradise."

The old man grasped his hand convulsively. "It is quite dark. I am afraid. Stay with me, my Jesus."

And so he fell asleep forever.

They buried him outside the city under the walls. Jesus planted the staff which Joseph had cut during the flight into Egypt, and had always carried with him, on the mound. And no sooner was it planted in the earth than it began to bear young shoots. And when Mary went the next day to pray there, behold the grave was surrounded with white lilies, which grew from the stick and spread themselves in rows over the mound.

After the old master's death trouble befell the family. People began to take their orders for work elsewhere, for they found it difficult to get on with the young master. A man who went against the Scriptures and traditional custom in so many things could not do his work properly. He seldom attended public worship in the Temple, and was never seen to give alms. In the morning he went down to the spring and washed himself, but otherwise he omitted all the prescribed ablutions. When the Rabbi of Nazareth reproached him for such conduct, he replied: "Who ought to wash, the clean or the unclean? Moses

knew his people when he made washing a law for them. Does uncleanness come from within or without? It is not the dust of the street that soils a man, but the evil thoughts of his heart. Is it unseemly to eat honest bread with dusty hands? Is it not more unseemly to take away your brother's bread with clean hands?"

The Rabbi considered that it would be foolish to waste more words on this trangressor of the law, and went his way. But next day he informed the carpenter that he was to stand on the Sabbath behind the poor-box, in order to see whether the well-washed hands of believing Jews took the bread away from their brothers, or rather bestow it liberally upon them. And as Jesus stood in the Temple, he observed the well-to-do Nazarenes dip their hands into the basin, with pious air throw large pieces of money into the poor-box, and then look round to see if their good example was observed. When it grew dark, a poor woman came and with her lean fingers put a farthing into the poor-box.

"Well, what do you say now?" asked the Rabbi of the carpenter.

Jesus answered: "I think the haughty rich people have washed themselves, and that still they give with unclean hands. They give away a small part of what they have taken from others, and give from their superabundance. The poor woman gave the largest gift in God's eyes. She gave all that she possessed."

And so it happened that Jesus became more and more estranged from Nazareth. Only poor folk and little children were attracted to him: he cheered the former and played with the latter. But otherwise men drew apart

from him, considering him an eccentric creature and perhaps a little dangerous. His mother sometimes tried to defend him: he had grown up in a foreign land among strange customs and ways of thought. At bottom he had the best of natures, so kind and helpful to others and so severe towards himself. How like a mother! What mother has not had the best of children? They despised her remarks and pitied her because her son was so unlike other boys and caused her anxiety. There was nothing to complain of in his work when he stuck to it. What a carpenter he might be with such aptness! Only he should not interfere in things he could not understand, and should not disturb people's belief in the religion of their fathers.

One day there was a marriage in the neighbouring town of Cana. Mary and her relatives were invited, for the bridegroom was a distant cousin. So far as Jesus was concerned, there would have been no great grief had he stayed away. Possibly he would not take any pleasure in the old marriage customs and the traditions to which they still held. Jesus understood the irony, but it did not hurt him, and so he went to the marriage in order to rejoice with the joyful. When the merriment was at its height, Mary drew her son aside and said: "I think it would be well if we went home now; we are not regarded with favour here. They would be glad of fewer guests, for I hear the wine has given out."

"What matters it to me if there 's no more wine," answered Jesus, almost roughly. "I do not want any."

"But the other guests do. The host is greatly embarrassed. I wish some one could help him."

"If they are thirsty, have the water jugs brought in," he said. "If the drinker has faith in his God then the water will be wine. He will be well content."

The host, in fact, saw no other way of satisfying his guests' thirst than in ordering large stone pitchers of water to be brought in from the well. He was vastly amazed when the guests found it delicious, and praised the wine that had just been poured out for them. "Usually," they said, "the host produces his best wine first, and when the carousers have drunk freely, he brings in worse. Our good host thinks differently, and to the best food adds the best wine."

But Jesus and his relations saw how the pitchers were filled at the well, and when they tasted their contents, some declared that things could not be all right here. Jesus himself drank, and saw that it was wine. Much moved, he went out into the starry night. "Oh, Father!" he said in his heart, "what dost thou intend with regard to this son of man? If it is thy will that water shall be turned into wine, it may then be possible to pour new wine into the old skins, the spirit and strength of God into the dead letter!"

John went out into the night to seek his master. "Sir," said the youth, when he stood before him, "what does it mean? They say that you have turned water into wine. I have often thought that you were different from all of us. You must be from heaven."

"And why not you also, John, who look up to it? Can any one attain the height who has not come from it?"

John remained standing by his side for a while. It was not always easy to grasp what he meant.

On their homeward way by night, the mother unburdened her anxious heart to her son. "You are so good, my child, and help people wherever you can. Why are you often so rough of speech?"

"Because they do not understand me," he replied; "because you, none of you, understand me. You think that if a man works at his wood in the carpenter's shop, then he is doing all that is necessary."

"Wood?" Of course a carpenter has to work with wood. Do you want to be a stonemason? Think, stones are harder than wood."

"But they give fire when struck together. Wood gives no sparks, nor would the Nazarenes yield any sparks, even if lightning struck them. They are like earth and damp straw. They are incapable of enthusiasm: they are only capable of languid irritation. But you 'll not build a kingdom of heaven with irritation. I despise the wood that always smokes and never burns."

"My son, I fear you will make such enemies of them that — "

"That I shall not be able to stay in Nazareth. Is n't that what you mean, mother?"

"I am anxious about you, my son."

"Happy the mother who is nothing worse. I am quite safe." He stopped and took her hand. "Mother, I 'm no longer a child or a boy. Do not trouble about me. Let me be as I am, and go where I will. There are other tasks to be fulfilled than building Jonas a cottage or Sarah a sheep-pen. The old world is breaking up, and the old heaven is falling into ruin. Let me go, mother; let me be

the carpenter who shall build up the kingdom of heaven."

The constellations spread themselves across the sky. Mary let her son go on before, down to the little town; she walked slowly behind and wept. She stood alone and had no influence with him. Every day he became more incomprehensible. To what would it lead?

CHAPTER ELEVEN

A STRANGE excitement prevailed among the people in Galilee, and spread through Samaria and Judæa even to Jerusalem. A new prophet had arisen. There were many in those days, but this one was different from the rest. As is always the way in such times, at first a few people paid heed feverishly, then they infected others with their unrest, and finally roused families and whole villages which had hitherto stood aloof. So at last all heeded the new prophet. At the time of the foreign rule old men had spoken of the King and Saviour who was to make the chosen people great and mighty. Expounders of the Scriptures had from generation to generation consoled those who were waiting and longing. Men had grown impatient under the intolerable foreign oppression, and a national desire and a religious expectation such as had never before been known in so high a degree had manifested itself.

And lo! strange rumours went through the land. As the south wind of spring blows over Lebanon, melts the ice, and brings forth buds, so were the hearts of men filled with new hope. A man out in the wilderness was preaching a new doctrine. For a long while he preached to stones, because, he said, they were not so hard as men's

understanding. The stones themselves would soon speak, the mountains be levelled and the valleys filled up so that a smooth road might be ready for the Holy Spirit which was drawing nigh.

Men grew keenly interested in those tidings. Some said: "Let us go out and hear him just for amusement's sake." They came back and summoned others to go out and see the extraordinary man. He wore a garment of camel's hair instead of a cloak, and a leather girdle round his loins. His hair was long, black, and in disorder, his face sunburnt, and his eyes flamed as if in frenzy. But he was not an Arab nor an Amalekite, he was one of the chosen people. Down by the lake he was better known. He was the son of Zacharias, a priest and a native of the wonderful land of Galilee. The Galileans had at first mocked at him, and with a side glance at Jesus, said: "What a blessed land is Galilee, where new teachers of virtue are as plentiful as mushrooms in rainy weather!" Jesus retorted by asking whether they knew what kind of a people it was that only produced preachers of repentance?

The name of the preacher in the wilderness was John. More and more people went out to hear him, and every one related marvels. He chased locusts and fed on them, and took the honey from the wild bees and swallowed it. He seemed to despise the ordinary food and customs of men. Since the murder of the innocents at Bethehem, he had lived in the wilderness, dwelling in a cave high up in the rocks of the mountain. It almost seemed that he loved wild beasts better than men, whose cloak of virtue

he hated because is was woven out of evil-smelling hypocrisy and wickedness.

They called him the herald. "We are surprised," they said, "that the Rabbis and High Priests in Capernaum, Tiberias, and Jerusalem should keep silent. They could put this man to death for his words." But the herald had no fear. He preached a new doctrine, and he poured water over the heads of those who joined him as a sign of the covenant.

"And what is his teaching?" asked others.

"Go and hear for yourselves!"

And so more and more people went out from Judæa and Galilee into the wilderness. The preacher had withdrawn a little way above the point where the river Jordan flows into the Dead Sea. The district, usually so deserted, was alive with all sorts of people, among them Rabbis and men learned in the law, who represented themselves as penitents, but desired to outwit the prophet with cunning. The preacher stood on a stone; he held a corner of his camel's hair garment pressed against his hairy breast with one hand, and the other he stretched heavenwards and said: "Rabbis, are ye here too? Are ye at last afraid of the wrath of heaven which ye see approaching, and so take refuge with him who calls on ye to repent? Ye learned hypocrites! Ye stone him who can hurt you with a breath, and praise him who brings with him a human sacrifice. See that your repentance does not become your judge. But if it is sincere, then receive the water on your head as a token that you desire to be pure in heart."

Such were the words he spoke. The scholars laughed

scornfully; others grumbled at the severity of his remarks, but kneeled down. He took an earthen vessel, dipped it in the waters of Jordan, and poured it over their heads so that little streams ran down their necks and over their brows. A man raised his head and asked: "Will you give us commandments?"

The prophet answered: "You have two coats and only one body. Yonder against the oak is a man who has likewise a body but no coat. I give no commandments; but you know what to do."

So the man went and gave his second coat to him who had none.

A lean old man, a tax-gatherer from Jerusalem, asked what he should do, since every one he met in the streets had a coat on his back.

"Do not ask more payment than is legal. Do not open your hand for silver pieces, nor shut your eyes to stolen goods."

"And we?" asked a Roman mercenary. "We are not the owners of our lives; are we, too, to have no commandments?"

"You have the sword. But the sword is violence, hatred, lust, greed. Take care! The sword is your sin and your judgment."

And then women came to him with a triumphant air, and exclaimed: "You wise man, you! We have no rights, so we have no duties? Is that not so?"

And the prophet said: "You assume rights for yourselves, and duties will be given you. The woman's commandment is: 'Thou shalt not commit adultery.'"

"And what do you say to men?" asked one of them.

"Men have many commandments besides that one. You must not tempt them with snares of the flesh, for they have more important things to do in the world than to make themselves pleasant to women. You must not allure them with the colour of your cheeks, nor with the tangles of your hair, nor with your swelling breasts. You shall not attract the eye of man through beautiful garments and sparkling jewels. You shall not glisten like doves when you are false like snakes."

The women were angry, and tried to set snares for him. So they smiled sweetly, and asked: "Your words of wisdom, oh prophet! only concern the women of the people. Royally-born women are excepted."

Then spoke the preacher: "Women born in the purple are of the same stuff as the leprous beggar-woman who lies in the street. No woman is excepted. The wives of kings live in the sight of all, and must obey the law twice and thrice as strictly. Since Herod put away his rightful wife, the Arab king's daughter, and lives openly in incest with his brother's wife, the angel of hell will strike at her."

"You all hear," said the women, turning to the assembled crowd. Then they pulled up their gowns high over their ankles, stepped into the river where it is shallow, and bared their brown necks, in order that the wild preacher might pour the water over them. The men pressed closer, but the prophet tore a branch from the cedar and drove the hypocritical penitents back. Some were glad that sin had no power over this holy man.

Then they sent an old man to him to ask who he really was. "Are you the Messiah whom we are expecting?"

"I am not the Messiah," answered the preacher. "But He is coming after me. I prepare the way for Him like the morning breeze ere the sun rises. As the heaven is above the earth, so He is greater than I. It is my prayer that I may be worthy to loosen His shoe latchets. I sprinkle your heads with water; He will sprinkle them with fire. He will separate you according as your hearts be good or evil. He will lay up the wheat in the garner with His fan and burn the chaff. Prepare yourselves — the kingdom of God is nearer than ye think."

The people were uneasy. Clouds came up over the mountains of Galilee, and their edges shone like silver. The air lay like a heavy weight over the valley of the Jordan, and not a twig stirred in the cedars. The strangers from Samaria and Judæa did not know the man who climbed down over the stones and went towards the preacher. He wore a blue woollen gown that came down over his knees, so that only his sandalled feet were seen. He might have been taken for a working-man had not his head, with its high, pale forehead and heavy waving locks, been so royal. A soft beard sprang from his upper lip, and there was such a wonderful light in his dark blue eyes that some were almost frightened by it. And they asked each other: "Who is the man with the fiery eyes?"

He reached the prophet. One hand hung down; he held the other against his breast. He said softly: "John, pour water over my head, too."

The prophet looked at the young man and was terrified. He went back two steps — they knew not why. Did he himself know?

"You!" he said, almost under his breath. "You desire to receive the token of repentance from me?"

"I will do penance — for them all. I will begin with water what will be ended with blood." That is what they thought to hear. In a man who speaks like this, there is something incredibly spiritual.

"He is a dreamer! He is a madman!" the people whisper one to another.

"No, he 's not, he 's not!" others declare.

"Did he not speak of blood?"

"It seemed so. Such young blood, and already repenting!"

"And as proud of it as a Roman."

"With eyes glowing like an Arab's."

"Looking at his hair you might take him for a German."

"He is neither a Roman, nor an Arab, nor a German," some one exclaimed, laughing; "he is the carpenter of Nazareth."

"The same who turned water into wine?"

"There are lots of stories about him. We know plenty of them."

"It is said that Herod's murder of the innocents was on his account."

When the crowd heard that they were quiet, and looked at the new arrival with a sort of awe. And so old Herod had taken him for the Messiah-King!

A feeling of reverence spread among the people. For Jesus stepped into the river. The prophet dipped his vessel in the water and poured it over his lightly-bent head. The edges of the clouds in the heavens shone with

the crimson light of evening. The eyes of the bystanders were riveted by a white speck which showed itself in the windows of heaven, first like a flower-bloom, and then like a fluttering pennon. It was a dove that flew down and circled round the head of him who had just been baptized.

"My dearly beloved son!"

The people whispered: "Whose voice was it that said: 'My dearly beloved son'?"

"Did n't it refer to him over whom the water has just been poured?"

A shudder seized many of them. It was just as if he was presented to men by the invisible God!

"We will ask him himself whose son he is," they said, and pressed towards the river. But he had gone away, and the twilight of the desert lay over the stream.

The same night Mary sat in her room at Nazareth, and sewed. She kept looking out of the window, for she would not go to bed till Jesus returned. When he gone out two days ago, he had turned to her again, looked at her, and said: "Mother, I go to my Father."

She thought he was going to the cemetery to pray at Joseph's tomb, as he often did. For in the city of the dead solitude may be found. When he returned neither on the first day nor on the second, she began to feel anxious. She waited up the whole night.

The next morning the little town rang with the news: "The carpenter has been seen with the preacher. He has been baptized."

"That 's just like him. One enthusiast keeps company with another."

"It would be more correct to say with false prophets. For what else is it when a man declares that he can wash away sin with a dash of water?"

Thereupon a Sidonian donkey-driver, who had come down the street: "That 's excellent! You Israelites can do so much with your ablutions. That would be a capital thing!"

"Ah! what things one hears! Everything points to the speedy destruction of the world." And one whispered in his ear, "I tell you, frankly, 't would be no great misfortune."

"Now John has caught it. Do you know what he 's always shouting?"

"The young carpenter, his apprentice? He 's never said anything that matters."

"Do you know what he 's always exclaiming? He strides through the streets, and his hair flies in the wind. He spreads out his hands before him, and says: 'The word has become flesh!'"

They shook their heads. But Mary sat at the window and looked out.

CHAPTER TWELVE

A VERY short time after these events there came two soldiers to the Jordan, not to have the water poured over their heads, but to arrest the desert preacher and take him to Jerusalem to Herod. Herod received him politely, and said: "I have summoned you here because I am told that you are the preacher."

"They call me preacher and Baptist."

"I want to hear you. And, indeed, you must refute what your enemies say against you."

"If it was only my enemies, it would be easy to refute them."

"They say that you insult my royal house, that you say the prince lives in incest with his brother's wife. Did you say that?"

"I do not deny it."

"You have come to withdraw it?"

"Sire," said the prophet, "I have come to repeat it. Your are living in incest with your brother's wife. Know that the day of reckoning is at hand. It will come with its mercy, and it will come with its justice. Put away this woman."

Herod grew white with rage that a man of the people should dare to speak thus to him. Royal ears

cannot endure such a thing, so he put the preacher in prison.

But the next night the prince had a bad dream. From the battlements he saw the city fall stone by stone into the abyss; he saw flames break out in the palace and temple, and the sound of infinite wailing rang through the air. When he awoke the words came into his mind: You who stone the prophets! and he determined to set the preacher free.

It was now the time when Herod should celebrate his birthday. Although Oriental wisdom advised that a birthday should be celebrated with mourning, a prince had no reason for so doing. Herod gave a banquet in honour of the day, and invited all the most important people in the province in order that while enjoying themselves they might have the opportunity of doing homage to him. He enjoyed himself royally, for Herodias, his brother's wife, was present, and her daughter, who was as lovely as her mother. She danced before him a series of dances which showed her beautiful figure, set off by the flowing white gown confined at the waist with a girdle of gold, to every advantage. Intoxicated by the feast and inflamed by the girl's beauty, the prince approached her, put his arm, from which the purple cloak had fallen back so that it was bare, round her warm neck, and held a goblet of wine to her lips. She smiled, did not drink, but said: "My lord and king! If I drank now from your goblet, you would drink at my lips. Those roses belong to my bridegroom."

"Who is the man who dares to be more fortunate than a king?" asked Herod.

"I do not yet know him," whispered the girl. "He is the man who shall give me the rarest bridal gift."

"And if it was Herod?"

The girl raised her almond eyes to the prince and said nothing. He almost lost his head with the sweetness of the shining eyes. "You are an enchanting witch, you!" he whispered. "Desire of me what you will."

The beauty had been primed by her mother, who wished to be revenged on John, whose prophecies might tear her from her kingly lover. The daughter breathed the words: "A dish for your table, oh king!"

"A dish of meat? Speak more plainly."

"Let your bridal gift be a dish of rare meat on a golden charger."

"I do not understand what you want."

"The head of the Baptist."

The king understood, turned aside, and said: "Horror, thy name is woman!"

Then she wept and murmured between her sobs: "I knew it. A woman is nothing to you but a flower of the field. You cut them down so that they turn to hay. And hay is for asses. You care more for the man who has mortally insulted yourself and my mother than you do for me."

"Indeed, I do not! If he deserves death, you shall have your desire."

"When does he whom the king loves deserve death?" groaned the girl, and sank into a swoon. He lifted her up, drew her to his breast, and what her words could not accomplish the embrace did — it cost the Baptist his life.

The banquet was most sumptuous. The most delicious

viands, gathered from every quarter, and sparkling wines graced the table. Harp players stood by the marble pillars, and sang praises to the king. Herod, a garland of red roses round his head, sat between the two women. He drank freely of the wine, and so hurriedly that the liquid dripped from his long, thin beard. Was he afraid of the last course? It appeared at midnight. It was covered with a white cloth, and only the beautifully-chased edge of the charger was visible. Herod shuddered and signed that the dish should be placed before the young woman who sat on his left. She hastily pulled off the cloth, and behold! a man's head; the black hair and beard, steeped in the blood that ran from the neck, lay in the charger. It stared with open eyes at the woman who, filled with voluptuous horror, leaned closely against the prince. Then the mouth of the head opened and spoke the words: "The Kingdom of God is near at hand!"

Horror and confusion filled the banqueting hall. "Who dared to say that?" shouted several voices. "'Twas the head of the prophet who prophecies even in death!"

Then a tumult arose in the palace, for this was the most terrible horror that the golden halls had ever seen. Long-restrained fury suddenly burst forth — the town was in flames, the men of Jerusalem rioted. The women were torn from Herod's side, and flung into the streets to the mercy of the mob. The prince was forced to fly. The story goes that in his flight he fell into the hands of the Arab king, who avenged his despised daughter in a terrible manner. Thus were godless hands stretched forth

from Herod's house against him who bore witness to the coming One.

. . . . .

After the act of baptism was accomplished, Jesus wandered for a long, long while — indeed, he paid no heed to time — along the banks of Jordan. Then he climbed the rocks, and when in the twilight he came to himself again and looked about, he saw that he was in the wilderness. The revelation vouchsafed at his baptism had snatched him from the earth. In that mysterious vision he had opened to him the new path which he had chosen to follow. What eternal peace surrounded him. Yet he was not alone among the barren rocks; never in his life had he been less lonely than here in the dim terrors of the wilderness. A deep silence prevailed. The stars in the sky sparkled and sparkled, and the longer he gazed at them the more ardently they seemed to burn. Gradually they seemed to sink downwards, and to become suns, while fresh legions pressed ever forward from the background, flying down unceasingly, the large and the small and the smallest, with new ones ever welling up from space — an inexhaustible source of heavenly light.

Jesus stood up erect. And when he lifted up his face it seemed as if his eye was the nucleus of all light.

So he forgot the world and remained in the wilderness. Each day he penetrated deeper into it, past abysses and roaring beasts. The stones tore his feet, but he marked it not; snakes stung his heels, but he noticed it not. Whence he obtained nourishment, what cleft in the rocks afforded him shelter? — that is immaterial to him who lives in

God. Once he had regarded the world and its powers as hard taskmasters, and now they seemed to him to be as nothing, for in him and with him was eternal strength. The old traditional Jehovah of Jewish hearts was no more; his was the all-embracing One, who carried the heavens and the earth in his hand, who called to the children of men: Return! and who stooped down to every seedling in order to awaken it. He himself became conscious of God — and after that, what could befall him?

One day he descended between the rocky stones to the coast of the Dead Sea that lay dark and still, little foam-tipped waves breaking on the shore. The expanse of water was lost in darkness in the distance, and stretched away heavy and lifeless. Cleft blocks of stone were scattered along the beach, and their tops glowed as red as iron in the forge. It was the hour of sunset. The towering stones stood like giant torches, and the bright colour was reflected on the bare pebbles on which the water lapped. For many thousand of years the fine yellow sand had drifted down from the walls of rock, and lay over the wide sloping plains of the shore. It was like dry, light "stone-snow," and Jesus, who strode over it, left his footprints in it. The next gust of wind disturbed it, the "stone-snow" was whirled about, and the dark stones were laid bare. Men are engulfed in those sand-fields, which, broken by blocks of stone, stretch away into infinity. Witness the bones which may be seen here and there, remains of dead beasts, and also legs and skulls of men who perished as hermits, or became the prey of lions. Such skulls, with their grinning teeth, warned the

traveller to turn back as he valued his life. Here is death! Jesus laid his hands over his breast. Here is life! The greater the loneliness, the more keenly may the nearness of God be realized.

Jesus preferred the rocky heights to the plain. He could see the wide expanse of the sky, and the clouds which wandered over its face and then disappeared like nations of nomads.

One day, in such a spot, he met an Arab chief. He was of gigantic stature, dressed in the dark cloak of the Bedouins, with a wild, grey beard, and a snub nose in a bony face. Beneath bushy eyebrows were a pair of unsteady eyes. His belt was full of weapons, his head was adorned with an iron band which kept his wild hair in some sort of order. The man looked at the young hermit not unkindly, and called him a worm who should pray that he might be mercifully trodden under foot. He must either swear allegiance to the desert chief, or be burned up by the hot stones.

Jesus scarcely heeded the impertinent speech. He only saw in the stranger a man on whom he would like to bestow all the happiness that was triumphant in his soul. So full of love was he that he could not bear it alone. And he said: "I am no worm to be trodden under foot. I am that Son of Man who brings you the new kingdom."

"Ah! the Messiah! Jesus of Nazareth, are you not? I have heard of you. Where are your soldiers?"

"I shall not conquer with the sword, but with the spirit."

The Arab shook his head mockingly. "Who will con-

quer with the spirit! Well, I won't play the scoffer. You are an orator, and that 's something. Listen, son of man; I like you. I, too, desire the new kingdom; let us go together."

And Jesus replied: "Whoever wishes can go with me. I go with no one."

"My friend, don't you know me?" asked the stranger. "I am Barabbas, king of the desert. Three thousand Arabs obey my behests. Look down into the valley. There is the key to the kingdom of the Messiah."

What the chief called the key to the kingdom of the Messiah was an army which, scattered over the plain, resembled a dark spot spreading out in the desert, as busy and animated as an ant-hill. The chief pointed down to it and said: "Look, there is my weapon. But I shall not conquer with that weapon, nor will you conquer with your words. For my weapons lack words, and your words lack weapons. I need the prophet and you the army. Warrior and orator allied, we shall take Jerusalem, I have made a mistake. For many years it has been my illusion that all strength lay in the body. And so I have cared for their bodies, fed and nourished them that they might become strong. But instead of becoming strong and daring, they have become indolent and cowardly. And now that I wish to use this army to free Judæa from the yoke of the Romans, they laugh in my face and answer me with words I once taught them. We have only this life, they cry, and we will not risk it any more. And when I ask, 'Not even for freedom?' they reply, 'Not even for freedom, because what is the use of freedom to us if we are slain.' Indolent beasts! they lack

enthusiasm. And now I find you. You are a master of oration. You say that you will conquer with the spirit. Come with me! Descend into the valley and inspire them with ardour. The legions are ours, our weapons are of perfect temper, nothing is wanting but fire, and that you have. The king must be allied with the zealot, otherwise the kingdom cannot be conquered. Come down with me. Tell them that you are the prophet. Incite them against Jerusalem, and exclaim: 'It is God's will!' If only fire can be made to burn within them, they will march like the very devil, overcome the foreigners, and you will instruct them in Solomon's Temple about the Messiah. You can tell them that he is coming, or that you yourself are he, just as you please. Then, according to your desire, you can establish your kingdom, and all the glory of the world will lie at your feet as at those of a God. Come, prophet, you give me the word, and I 'll give you the sword!"

"Begone, you tempter of hell!" exclaimed Jesus, and his eyes shot forth a ray of light that the other could not bear.

And then Jesus was once more alone among the rocks, under the open sky.

It was under the sacred sky of the desert where his Father came down to him that his spirit became quite free — his heart more animated, glowing with love. And thus was Jesus perfected Leaving the desert, he then sought out the fertile land; he sought out men.

His earthly task stood clear and fixed before him.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

The Lake of Gennesaret, also called the Sea of Galilee, lies to the east of Nazareth, where the land makes a gradual descent, and where, among the hills and the fertile plains, pleasant villages are situated. The mountains of Naphtali, which in some places rise up steeply from its banks, were clothed with herbage in the days of David. But gradually, as stranger peoples cultivated them, fertility descended to the hills and valleys.

Near where the Jordan flows into the sea, on the left of the river under the sandy cliffs of Bethsaida, a small cedar forest, the seeds of which may have been blown thither from Lebanon, grows close down to the shore of the lake. A fisher-boat, rocking in the shade on the dark waters, was tied to one of the trees. The holes in it were stuffed with seaweed, the beams fastened with olive twigs. Two tall poles crossed were intended for the sail, which now lay spread out in the boat because the boatman was sleeping on it. The brown stuff, made of camel's hair, was the man's most valuable possession. On the water it caught the wind for him, on land it served as a cloak, if he slept it formed his bed.

The little elderly man's face was tickled by a cedar twig for so long that at length he awoke. He saw a

young woman sitting on a rock. She was just going to hurry off with her round basket when the fisherman called loudly to her: "Well, Beka, daughter of Manasseh, whither are you taking your ivory white feet?"

"My feet are as brown as yours," replied Beka. "Stop mocking at me, Simon."

"How can I be mocking at you? You 're a fisherman's child, like me. But your basket is too heavy for you."

"I am taking my father his dinner."

"Manasseh has had a good catch. Look, smoke is rising yonder behind the palms of Hium. He is cooking the fish. But I have eaten nothing since yesterday at the sixth hour."

"I can well believe that, Simon. The fish of the Lake of Gennesaret do not swim ready-cooked into the mouth. He who lies like a child in the cradle, and lets the gods provide — !"

Simon, with his legs apart in order to preserve the balance, stood up in the boat. "Beka," he said, "let the gods alone, they won't feed us; they eat the best that men have."

"Then hold to the one God who feeds the birds."

"And who delivers the Jews to the Romans. No; Jehovah won't help me either. So I 'm forsaken and stand alone, a tottering reed."

"How can I help it if you stand alone?" asked the daughter of Manasseh. "Are there not daughters in Galilee who also stand alone?"

"Beka, I am glad that you speak so," replied the fisherman. "Why, how can Simon come to an under-

standing with anybody so long as he can't come to an understanding with himself? And fishing delights me not. Everything is a burden. Often when I lie here and look up into the blue sky, I think: If only a storm would come and drive me out on the open sea — into the wild, dark terror, then, Simon, you would lie there and extend your arms and say: Gods or God, do with me what you will."

"Don't talk like that, Simon. You must not jest with the Lord. There, take it."

And so saying, Beka took a magnificent bunch of grapes out of her basket, and handed it to him.

He took it, and by way of thanks said: "Beka, a year hence there 'll be some one who will find in you that sweet experience which I vainly seek in the Prophets."

Whereupon she swiftly went her way towards the blue smoke that rose up behind the palms of Hium.

It was no wonder that the fisherman gazed after her for a long time. Although he cared little for the society of his fellow-creatures, because they were too shallow to sympathize with what occupied his thoughts, he felt a cheerless void when he was alone. He was misunderstood on earth, and forsaken by heaven. He feared the elements, and the Scriptures did not satisfy him. Then the little man threw himself on his face, put his hand into the water of the lake, and sprinkled his brow with it. He seated himself on the bench of the boat in order to enjoy Beka's gift.

At the same moment the sand on the bank crackled, and a tall man, in a long brown cloak, and carrying a pilgrim's staff, came forward. His black beard fell al-

most to his waist, where a cord held the cloak together. His high forehead was shaded by a broad-brimmed hat; his eye was directed to the fisherman in the boat.

"Boatman, can you take three men across the lake?"

"The lake is wide," answered Simon, pointing to his fragile craft.

"They want to get to Magdala to-day."

"Then they can take the road by Bethsaida and Capernaum."

"They are tired," said the other. "They have travelled here from the desert, and by a wide *détour* through Nazareth, Cana, and Chorazin."

"Are you one of them?" asked Simon. "I ought to know you. Have n't we been fishing together at Hamath?"

"It may be that we know each other," was the somewhat roguish reply. In fact, they knew each other very well. Only Simon had become so strange.

Now he said: "If it will really be of service to you, I 'll go gladly. But you see for yourself that my boat is bad. You are exhausted, my friend; you have travelled far while I have rested in the shade the whole day. I have n't deserved any fine food. May I offer you these grapes?"

The black-bearded man bent down, took the grapes, and vainshed behind the cypresses.

He went to a shady spot where were two other men, both dressed in long, dark woollen garments. One was young and had delicate, almost feminine, features, and long hair. He lay sleeping, stretched out on the grass, his staff leaning against a rock near him. The other sat up-

right. We recognize him. He is Jesus, the carpenter of Nazareth. He has come hither from the wilderness, through Judæa and Galilee, where sympathizing companions joined him, a boatman, called James, and his former apprentice, John. With one hand he supported his brow, the other rested protectingly on the sleeping John's head.

The long-bearded man came hurrying up, crying: "Master, I have received some grapes for you."

He who was thus addressed pointed to the sleeping youth, lest he should be waked with loud talking. Then he said softly: "James! Shall I forgive the lie for the sake of the good you wish to do me? Who knows anything of me? The grapes were given to you."

"And I will eat them," returned James; "only permit me to eat them in the way in which they taste best to me."

"Do so."

"They taste best to me if I see you eat them."

Jesus took the gift, and said: "If we both satisfy ourselves, my dear James, what will there be for poor John? We are inured to fatigue; he is unaccustomed to it. I think that, of the three of us, it is John who ought to eat the grapes."

Since the long-bearded man offered no objection, John ate the grapes when he awoke. James announced that the fisherman was willing to take them, so they proceeded to the bank and got into the boat.

Simon looked at the tired strangers with sympathy, and vigorously plied his oars. The waves rippled and the rocking skiff glided over the broad expanse of waters

which, on the south side, appeared endless. From the way in which the two men spoke to the Master, Simon thought to himself: "A rabbi, and they are his pupils." To the Master's questions regarding his life and trade, the fisherman gave respectful answers, taking care to remark that he had not to complain of overmuch good fortune, for often he fished all day and all night without catching anything, a success he could equally well obtain if he lay all day idle in his boat and let himself be rocked.

The Master asked him with a smile what he would say to fishing for men.

"I don't know what you mean."

"You 've already three in your net," said James gaily.

"And God help me!" exclaimed the fisherman, "for we must pray to Him for help to-day. Look over there at the mountains of Hium. Just now it looks so beautifully blue that you would take it for a sunny sky. But the white edges! In an hour there 'll be more of them."

"Hoist the sail, fisherman, and bale out," advised James. "I understand something of the business."

"Then you would n't say hoist the sail to-day," returned Simon.

"Listen," said James; "you know the river which brings the black sand and the little red fishes with the sharp heads down to this lake from the mountains of Golan. My cottage was by that river — you surely know it?"

"Is n't it there still?" asked Simon.

"It is there, but it is no longer mine," said James. "I

have left it in order to follow the Master. Do you know Him, Simon?"

He had whispered the last words behind the back of the Master, who sat silent on the bench, and looked out over the calm waters. He seemed to be enjoying the rest; the breeze played softly with His hair. As a protection from the sun's rays John had fashioned a piece of cloth into a sort of turban and wound it round His head. He looked with amusement at the reflection of the headdress in the water.

"For whom do you take Him?" asked James, pointing to Jesus.

And the fisherman answered, "For whom do you take that?" He pointed to the distance; he saw the storm. The mountains were enveloped in a grey mist which, pierced by the lightning, moved slowly downwards. Before them surged the foaming waters, the waves white-crested. A gust of wind struck the boat; the water began to beat heavily against it, so that it was tossed about like a piece of cork. Since Simon had not put up the sail there was now no need to reef it. Flakes of foam flew over the spars, the beams groaned. The clouds rushed on, driving the heaving, thundering waves before them. Soon the little boat was overtaken by darkness, which was only relieved by flashes of lightning. Long ago Simon had let go the rudder, and exclaimed, "Jehovah!" Thunder claps were the only answer. Then the fisherman fell on his face and groaned: "He gives no help; I thought as much."

James and John sat close to the Master and tried to rouse Him from the dream into which He had sunk.

"What do you want of Me?"

"Master!" exclaimed James, "you are so entirely with your heavenly Father that you do not see how terrible is our doom."

"I thought as much," repeated Simon, almost weeping.

Jesus looked at him earnestly, and said: "If you keep on saying: I thought as much, well, then, so it must be. Think rather that God's angels are with you! And you, James! Have you forgotten the trust you had in God on dry land? Yesterday in the quiet eventide, when, well fed and cared for, we sat in the inn at Chorazin, you spoke much of trust in God. Trust Him also in distress."

"O Master, I see help nowhere."

"Learn to believe without seeing."

As He spoke a flash of lightning blinded their eyes, and when after a time they were able to look up again, a wild terror seized them. The Master was not there. Now that they no longer saw Him, they shouted loudly; shrieked out His name. Only John remained calm, and looked out into the darkness, wrapt in some bewilderment or trance.

The foam flew into their faces and reduced them to utter confusion; they could only involuntarily hold tight to the beams of the swaying vessel. "Living or dying we will not leave Him," said James. But the Master had left them. It seemed as though He had never existed. They seized the rudder again, and, with the courage of men in the presence of death, wrestled with the storm which seeemd disinclined to let its victims go. "God is with us!" exclaimed Simon quickly, and worked with all

that remained of his strength. "God is with us!" exclaimed James, and planted the rudder firmly in the water. Only John did not stir. Bending over the side, he stared out into the wild, grey, whirling waters. He espied in the mist a circle of light in which appeared a figure that came nearer, and behold! Jesus was walking on the sea slowly towards the ship. The waves grew smooth under His feet, the sea grew light all over, the rock-towers of Hippos could be seen in the distance, with the evening sun sinking behind them. Jesus sat among His friends, and with kindly words chid them for their despondency.

"Oh, wonderful!" exclaimed James. "While you were with us, we were of little faith, and when we could not see you, we believed."

"'T was your faith that helped," said Jesus. Then, laying His hand on the youth's shoulder: "And what is My wrapt John dreaming of? I was not yonder in the midst; I was here with you. I tell you, friends: He is blind who sees without believing, and clear-sighted who believes without seeing."

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

An earthly light penetrates the holy darkness, and animated scenes at Magdala, on the lake, are visible to me. Fishermen and boatmen, shepherds, artisans from the town, people from the neighbouring villages and from the mountains, are gathered together on the quay where the boats land their passengers. For the rumour has gone forth that the new prophet is coming. And in the chattering crowd it is said that he is a magician from the East who possesses miraculous powers, and can make the sick whole. An amusing thing had happened at Capernaum. The prophet had been there, and a man ill with rheumatism, a beggar who lived on his lame leg had been dragged in his bed to him. Now the prophet could not endure beggars who nursed their infirmities in order to display them, who pretended poverty, troubled themselves about nothing, and yet wished to live in comfort. The prophet liked to deprive them of their begging tool, namely, the infirmity, so that they were compelled to work. He healed the man's rheumatic leg, and said: "Take up thy bed and walk." And the sick man was much astounded over the turn things had taken; the bed had carried him there, but he must carry the bed back.

Others said the prophet was an Egyptian, and could foretell the future. Whereupon some one observed that if he could not foretell the future he would not be a prophet.

"By Father Abraham!" exclaimed an old ferryman, "if prophets had always foretold truly the universe would have fallen into the sea and been drowned long ago. I can prophesy too; if he comes, well, he 'll be here."

"Then he 'll soon be here," said a fisherboy, laughing, "for there he comes."

A boat, tossed up and down on the waves, was approaching, and in it sat four men.

"Which is he?"

"The one with the black beard."

"Oh, that 's rubbish! The man with the beard is James, the boatman from the Jordan Valley."

"Then it must be the bald man."

"But, Assam, you surely know Simon the fisherman of Bethsaida, who comes every month to the market here and spoils other men's business with his absurdly low prices."

When they had landed, His companions could scarcely steer a way for Him through the crowd. The people looked at Him; some were disappointed. That prophet was not sufficiently different from themselves. Was it really He? The carpenter of Nazareth! Well, then, we 've had a nice run for nothing. We know what He has to say, and what He can do He does not do."

"He will do it, though. He did it in Cana. Bring up the water pitchers — we 'll be merry to-day."

The crowd pressed forward more and more eagerly, for many had come a long distance, and desired to see Him close and hear Him speak.

The evening presented a good opportunity. It was already dark; a torch fixed to the pillar on the shore diffused a dull red light over the surging crowd. Jesus wished to pass on quickly, but He could not. A woman fleeing from her pursuers cast herself at His feet. She was young, her hair streamed loose, her limbs were trembling with fear; she knelt down and put her arms round His legs. He bent down to her and tried to raise her, but she held fast to His feet and could not compose herself. Then the people began to shout: "The traitress, the Bethany serpent, what has she to do with Him?"

Jesus put His hand on her head. He stood up straight and asked aloud: "Who is this woman that you have a right to insult her?"

"Who is she? Ask the son of Job. She's an adulteress. Married but a few weeks ago to the brave old son of Job, her parents' friend, she deceives him with a young coxcomb, the hussy!"

The abuse they hurled against the helpless creature cannot be repeated. It was the women, too, who shouted the loudest; especially one, the wife of a man who made fishing-nets, was so filled with moral indignation that she tore her dress and scattered the rags over the sinner. Words of the most venomous abuse poured from this accuser's mouth in bitter complaint that such a creature should shame the sacred name of woman; she passionately declared her desire that the evil-doer should be stoned. Soon the crowd followed with "Stone her!"

and a young porter who stood near the wife of the fishing-net maker stooped to pick up a stone from the road, and prepared to cast it at the sinner. Jesus protected her with His hand, and exclaimed: "Do not touch her. Which of you is without sin? Let him come and cast the first stone."

Unwillingly they let their arms fall, and those who already held stones in their hands dropped them quietly on to the ground. But Jesus turned to the persecuted woman and said: "They shall not harm you. Tell Me what has happened."

"Lord!" she whimpered, and clasped His feet afresh, "I have sinned! I have sinned!" and she sobbed and wept so that His feet were damp with her tears.

"You have sinned!" He said in a voice, the gentle sound of which went to many a heart — "sinned. And now you are sorry. And you do not try to vindicate yourself. Get up, get up! Your sins will be forgiven."

"How? What?" grumbled the people. "What 's this we hear? He speaks kindly to the adulteress. He pardons her sin. This prophet will indeed find followers."

When Jesus heard their grumbling He said aloud: "I tell you I am like a shepherd. He goes out to search for a lost lamb. He does not fling it to the wolves, but takes it home to the fold that it may be saved. I do not rejoice over the proud, but over the repentant. The former sink down; the latter rise up. Listen to what I tell you. A certain man had two sons. One was of good disposition and took care of his property. The other was disobedient, and one day said to his father: 'Give me my share of the substance; I wish to go to a far country.' The father was

sorry, but as the young man insisted he gave him his share, and he went away. So while one brother worked and gained and saved at home, the other lived in pleasure and luxury, and squandered his property out in the world, and became so poor that he had to be a swineherd and eat husks with the swine. He got ill and wretched, and was despised by every one. Then he remembered his father, whose meanest servant lived in plenty. Utterly downcast and destitute, he returned home, knelt before his father, and said: 'Father, I have sinned deeply! I am no longer worthy to be your son; let me be your meanest servant.' Then his father lifted him up, pressed him to his heart, had him robed in costly garments, ordered a calf to be slaughtered and the wineskins to be filled in readiness for a banquet, and invited all his family to it that they might rejoice with him. All came except his other son. He sent a message to say that he had faithfully served his father all his life, yet no calf or buck had been slaughtered on his account. He found more honour in eating bread and figs alone in his room than in sitting at the banquet table with idle fellows and spendthrifts. Then his father sent to him and said: 'Wrong, wrong you are! Your brother was lost and is saved. Look to it that your envy turns not to your loss. Come and be merry with me!' I tell you that the heavenly Father rejoiceth more over a sinner that repenteth than over a righteous man."

Then a Pharisee stepped out from the crowd, wrapped his cloak round him with much dignity, and uttered the saying of a Jewish scholar: "Only the righteous man shall stand before God!"

To which Jesus replied: "Have you not heard of the publican who kneeled backwards in the Temple, and did not venture to approach the altar because he was a poor sinner? The Pharisee stands proudly by the altar and prays: 'Lord, I thank thee that I am not wicked like that man in the corner!' But when they went forth from the Temple, the publican's heart was full of grace, and the Pharisee's heart was empty. Do you understand?"

Thereupon several of them drew back. Jesus bent over the penitent and said: "Woman, rise and depart in peace!"

The people were outwardly rather calmer. Inwardly they were still restless, but they began now to be a little more satisfied with Him.

Meanwhile James had to settle with the fisherman about payment for the voyage. Simon covered his face with his mantle, and said with gentle rebuke: "Do not mock me. I have been punished enough. I am ashamed of my cowardice. I see now that I 'm neither a fisherman nor a sailor, but a mere useless creature. This man whom you call Master, do you know what has come over me, thanks to Him? This — that he who saw Him in the storm, and heard His words about sinners, leaves Him not again. No, I have never seen any like Him. If only Manasseh, the fisherman, and his daughter, and my brother Andrew had been there!"

"They will come directly," said James.

"How comes it, James," asked the fisherman, "that you are with this man and dare to follow Him?"

"That is quite simple, my friend. I merely follow Him. Whoever pleases can have my little property. I follow Him."

"But whither, James, whither are you journeying?"

And James answered: "To the Kingdom of God: to eternal life."

Then the fisherman, with trembling hand, felt for James's arm, and said: "I will go too."

An hour had scarcely passed before a fresh tumult arose. It came from the house of the maker of fishing-nets. He and a neighbour were hauling the former's wife along, the same woman who had been so indignant against the adulteress shortly before. It was suggested that she should be brought to the prophet, but her husband said: "He is a bad judge in such matters," and wished to take her down to the lake. But the people crowded around Jesus, and told Him what had happened. The woman had been caught with Joel, the porter. The accused struck out round her, violently denied the charge, and bit her husband, who had hold of her, in the hand. Others came up and confirmed the accusation. The woman blasphemed, and reduced her husband to silence by proclaiming his crimes.

Jesus burned with anger. He exclaimed in a loud voice: "Cursed be the hypocrite and the faithless, and the violent! Justice, judgment for such as her!"

Then the woman shrieked: "You speak of justice, you who yourself recognize no justice. Is it just that you should bless one of two lovers, and curse the other?"

And Jesus: "I tell you: he who repents is accepted; he who will not repent is cast out."

Then He turned round, and, wrapt in thought, walked along the bank in the mild night. Simon, the fisherman,

followed Him. He touched His wide sleeve and implored: "Master, take me too."

Jesus asked him: "What do you seek with Me, Simon, the fisherman? If any one seeks a polished crystal and finds a rough diamond, he is vexed; he does not recognize its value. Look at this obdurate woman: she says that I am not just because I am severe. To-morrow ten of the corrupt may shout, the day after a hundred; yet ere long he who is rewarded to-day may be surrounded by cruel enemies, and with him those who support him. My word ruins the worldly and My mercy annoys the powerful. They will destroy with fire and sword the seeds which I sow. Simon, you did not strike Me as one of the strongest on the sea. I demand not a little. If you will come to Me, you must abandon everything that is now yours. You cannot have Me and the world. If you can make sacrifices, if you can forget, if you can suffer, then come with Me. Yes, and if you can die for Me, then come."

"Master, I will go with you."

"If you can do that, then the burden will be easy; then you will have the peace which none finds in the world."

"Master," exclaimed Simon, loudly, "I will go with you."

Others who had followed Him along the bank heard the decision. They marvelled at the words that had passed, and the erring woman whom He had protected would not leave Him. In the distance the clamour could still be heard, but gradually the crowd dispersed. Jesus then sought lodging for Himself and His disciples.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

A SHORT time after, some of those who had formed the crowd at Magdala were gathered together in the house of the Rabbi Jairus. They were watching the dead. For in the centre of the room, on a table, lay the body of the Rabbi's daughter shrouded in white linen. Her father was so cast down with grief that his friends knew not how to console him. Then some one suggested calling in Jesus of Nazareth, whom they had just seen resting with His followers under the cedars of Hirah. They narrated the miracles that He had lately worked. On the road leading to Capernaum a man was lying side by side with his little son, into whom had entered the spirit of epilepsy. The child had fallen down and foamed at the mouth, and his teeth and hands were so locked together that his father, in his despair, all but strangled him. He had already taken the child to the disciples of Jesus, but they had not been able to help him. Then he sought the Master and exclaimed angrily: "If you can do anything, help him!" "Take heed that we do not all suffer because of him," the prophet said, and then made the child whole. And they told yet more. On the other side of the lake He had made a deaf mute to speak, and at Bethsaida had made a blind man to see. But, above all,

every one knew how at Nain He had brought back a young man to life who had already been carried out of the house in his coffin! A wine-presser was there who told something about an old woman who had vehemently prayed the prophet to cure her sickness. Thereupon Jesus said: "You are old and yet you wish to live! What makes this earth so pleasing to you?" and she replied: "Nothing is pleasing to me on this earth. But I do not want to die until the Saviour comes, who will open the gates of heaven for me." And He: "Since your faith is so strong, woman, you shall live to see the Saviour." Thereupon she rose up and went her way. These were the things He did, but He did not like them to be talked about.

Such was the talk among the people gathered round the little girl's corpse. Among the company was an old man who was of those who liked to display their wisdom on every possible occasion. He declared that faith and love, nothing else, produced such miracles. No miracle-worker could help an unbeliever; but a man whom the people loved could easily work miracles. "They forget everything — all his failures, and remember and magnify everything — all his successes. That 's all there is in it."

A man answered him: "It is important that he should be loved, but the love is compelled by some mysterious power. No one can make himself beloved of his own accord, it must be given him."

They determined, thanks to all this talk — a mingling of truth and error — to invite the prophet to the house.

When Jesus entered it, He saw the mourning assembly, and the Rabbi, who pulled at his gown until he tore it. He saw the child lying on the table ready for burial, and asked: "Why have you summoned Me? Where is the dead girl?"

The Rabbi undid the shroud so that the girl lay exposed to view. Jesus looked at her, took hold of her hand, felt it, and laid it gently down again. "The child is not dead," He said, "she only sleepeth."

Some began to laugh. They knew the difference between death and life!

He stepped up to them, and said: "Why did you summon Me if you do not believe in Me? If you have assembled here to watch the dead, there 's nothing for you to do."

They crept away in annoyance. He turned to the father and mother: "Be comforted. Prepare some food for your daughter." Then He took hold of the child's cold hand, and whispered: "Little girl! Little girl! wake up, it is morning."

The mother uttered a cry of joy, for the child opened her eyes. He stood by, and they seemed to hear Him say: "Arise, my child. You are too young to have gained heaven yet. The Father must be long sought so that He may be the more beloved. Go your way and seek Him."

When the girl, who was twelve years old, stood on her feet, and walked across the floor, the parents almost fell on Jesus in order to express their thanks. He put them aside. "I understand your gratitude. You will do what I do not wish. You will go to the street corners and exclaim: 'He raised our child from the dead;' and the

people will come and ask Me to heal their bodies, while I am come to heal their souls. And they will desire Me to raise the dead, while I am here to lead their spirits to eternal life."

"Lord, how are we to understand you?"

"When in good time you shall have learned how little the mortal body and earthly life signify, then you will understand. If, as you say, I have raised your child from the dead, what thanks do you owe Me? Do you recognize what he who calls back a creature from happiness to misery does? What Saviour would do that?"

"You said yourself, Master, that the child was too young to gain heaven yet."

"She has not gained it; she possessed it in her innocent heart. She will become a maiden, and a wife, and an old woman. She will lose heaven and seek it in agony. It will be well for her if then she comes to the Saviour and begs: 'My soul is dead within me, Lord; wake it to eternal life.' But if she comes not — then it would be better that she had not waked to-day."

The mother said in all humility: "Whatsoever Thou doest, Master, that is surely right."

He went to the table where the child was comfortably eating her food, laid His hand on her head, and said: "You have come to earth from heaven, now give up earth for heaven; what is earned is greater than what is given."

So the wife of Rabbi Jairus heard as Jesus went out of the door. They remained His adherents until near the days of the persecution.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

About the same time things began to go ill with Levi, the tax-gatherer, who lived on the road to Tiberias. One morning his fellow-residents prepared a discordant serenade for him. They pointed out to Levi with animation, from the roof of his house, in what honour he was held, by means of the rattling of trays and clashing of pans, since he had accepted service with the heathen as toll-keeper and demanded money even on the Sabbath.

The lean tax-gatherer sat in a corner of his room and saw the dust fly from the ceiling, which seemed to shake beneath the clatter. He saw, too, how the morning sun shining in at the window threw a band of light across the room, in which danced particles of dust like little stars. He listened, and saw, and was silent. When they had had enough of dancing on the roof they jumped to the ground, made grimaces at the window, and departed.

A little, bustling woman came out of the next room, stole up to the man, and said: "Levi, it serves you right!"

"Yes, I know, Judith," he answered, and stood up. He was so tall that he had to bend his head in order not to strike it against the ceiling. His beard hung down in

thin strands; it was not yet grey, despite his pale, tired face.

"They will stone you, Levi, if you continue to serve the Romans," exclaimed the woman.

"They hated me even when I did not serve the Romans," said the man. "Since that Feast of Tabernacles at Tiberias when I said that Mammon and desire of luxury had estranged the God of Abraham from the chosen people, and subjected them to Jupiter, they have hated me."

"But you yourself follow Mammon," she returned.

"Because since they hate me I must create a power for myself which will support me, if all are against me. It is the power with which the contemned man conquers his bitterest enemies. You don't understand me? Look there!" He bent down in a dark corner of the chamber, lifted an old cloth, and displayed to view a stone vessel like a mortar. "Real Romans," he said, grinning; "soon a small army of them. And directly it is big enough, the neighbours won't climb on to the roof and sing praises to Levi with pots and pans, but with harps and cymbals."

"Levi, shall I tell you what you are," exclaimed the woman, the muscles of her red face working.

"I am a publican, as I well know," he returned calmly, carefully covering his money chest with the cloth. "A despised publican who takes money from his own people to give to the stranger, who demands toll-money of the Jews although they themselves made the roads. Such an one am I, my Judith! And why did I become a Roman publican? Because I wished to gain money so as to support myself among those who hate me."

"Levi, you are a miser," she said. "You bury your money in a hole instead of buying me a Greek mantle like what Rebecca and Amala wear."

"Then I shall remain a miser," he replied, "for I shall not buy you a Greek mantle. Foreign garments will plunge the Jews into deeper ruin than my Roman office and Roman coins. It is not the receipt of custom, my dear wife, that is idolatry, but desire of dress, pleasure, and luxury. Street turnpikes are not bad at a time when our people begin to be fugitives in their own land, and with all their trade and barter to export the good and import the evil. Since the law of Moses respecting agriculture there has been no better tax than the Roman turnpike toll. What have the Jews to do on the road?"

"You will soon see," said Judith. "If I don't have the Greek mantle in two days from now, you 'll see me on the road, but from behind."

"You don't look bad from behind," mischievously returned Levi.

The knocker sounded without. The tax-gatherer looked through the window, and bade his wife undo the barrier. She went out and raised a piercing cry, but did not unclose the barrier. Several men had come along the road, and were standing there; the woman demanded the toll. A little man with a bald head stepped forward. It was the fisherman from Bethsaida. He confessed that they had no money. Thereupon the woman was very angry, for it was her secret intention thenceforth to keep the toll-money herself in order to buy the Greek purple stuff like that worn by Rebecca and Amala.

When Levi heard her cry, he went out and said: "Let

them pass, Judith. You see they are not traders. They won't do the road much damage. Why they 've scarcely soles to their feet."

Then Judith was quiet, but she took a stolen glance at one of the men who stood tall and straight in his blue mantle, his hair falling over his shoulders, his pale face turned towards her with an earnest look. "What a man ? Is something the matter with me ? Perhaps he misses the Greek mantle that he sees other women wear ?"

"How far have you come ?" the toll-keeper asked the men.

"We 've come from Magdala to-day," replied Simon, the fisherman.

"Then it is time that you rested here a little in the shade. The sun has been hot all day."

When Judith saw that they were really preparing to avail themselves of the invitation, she hastened to her room, adorned herself with gay-coloured stuffs, a sparkling bracelet, and a pearl necklace that she had lately acquired from a Sidonian merchant. She came out again with a tray of figs and dates. The tall, pale man — it was Jesus — silently passed on the tray, and took no refreshment Himself. His penetrating glance made her uneasy. Perhaps He would let Himself be persuaded. She placed herself before Him, more striking and bold in her splendour.

"Woman," He said suddenly, "yonder at Rain grows a thistle. It has prickles on the stem and the flower, it is covered with the dust of the highway and eaten away by insects. But it is more beautiful than an arrogant child of man."

Judith started violently. She rushed into the house, and slammed the door behind her so that the walls echoed. The tax-gatherer gave the speaker an approving glance, and sighed.

Then Jesus asked him: "Are you fond of her?"

"She is his neighbour!" observed a cheerful-looking little man who formed one of the band of travellers. The jesting word referred to the Master's speech of the day before on love of one's neighbour.

Levi nodded thoughtfully and said: "Yes, gentlemen, she is my nearest — enemy."

"Is n't she your wife?" asked Simon.

Without answering him, the tax-gatherer said: "I am a publican, and blessed with mistrust as far as my eye can reach. Yet all those without do not cause me as much annoyance as she who is nearest me in my house."

One of the men laid his hand on his shoulder: "Then, friend, see that she is no longer your nearest. Come with us. We have left our wives and all the rest of our belongings to go with Him. Don't you know Him? He is the man from Nazareth."

The publican started. The man of whom the whole land spoke, the prophet, the miracle-worker? This young, kindly man was He? He who preached so severely against the Jews? Did n't I say almost the same, that time at the Feast of Tabernacles? And yet the people were angry. They listen reverently to this man and follow Him. Shall I do so, too? What hinders me? I, the much-hated man, may be dismissed the service at any moment. I may be driven from my house to-day, as soon as to-morrow? And my wife, she 'll probably be seen on

the road from behind? There 's only one thing I can't part with, but I can take that with me."

Then he turned to the Nazarene, held the tray with the remains of the fruit towards Him: "Take some, dear Master!"

The Master said gently, in a low voice: "Do you love Me, publican?"

The tax-gatherer began to tremble so that the tray nearly fell from his hands. Those words! and that look! He could not reply.

"If you love Me, go with Me, and share our hardships."

"Our joys, Lord, our joys," exclaimed Simon.

At that moment a train of pack-mules came along the road. The drivers whipped the creatures with knotted cords, and cursed that there was another turnpike. The tax-gatherer took the prescribed coins from them, and pointed out their ill-treatment of the animals. For answer he received a blow in his face from the whip. Levi angrily raised his arm against the driver. Then Jesus stepped forward, gently pulled his arm down, and asked: "Was his act wrong?"

"Yes!"

"Then do not imitate it."

And the little witty man again interposed: "If you go with us, publican, you 'll have two cheeks, a right and a left. But no arm, do you understand?"

The remark had reference to a favourite saying of the Master when He was defenceless and of good-cheer in the presence of a bitter enemy. Several received the allusion with an angry expression of countenance.

"But it is true," laughed the little man. "The Master said: 'Let Thaddeus say what he likes. He suffered yesterday in patience the wrath of an Arab.'"

"Yes, indeed; because they found no money, they beat Thaddeus."

"If we meet another of that sort, we 'll defend ourselves," said the publican, "or robbery 'll become cheap."

"It 's easy to see, tax-gatherer, that you have n't known the Master long," said the little man whom they called Thaddeus. "We and money, indeed!"

Then the Master said: "A free soul has nothing to do with Mammon. It 's not worth speaking of, let alone quarrelling over. Violence won't undo robbery. If you attempt violence, you may easily turn a thief into a murderer."

While they were talking the publican went into his house. He had made his decision. He would quietly bid his wife farewell, put the money in a bag and tie it round his waist. He did not do the first, because Judith had fled by the back door; he did not do the second, because Judith had emptied the stone vessel and taken the money with her.

Levi came sadly from the toll-house, went up to Jesus, and lifted his hands to heaven: "I am ready, Lord; take me with you."

The Master said: "Levi Matthew, you are mine."

Thaddeus came with the tray of fruit. "Brother, eat of your table for the last time. Then trust in Him who feeds the birds and makes the flowers to grow."

As they went together along the dusty road, the new disciple related his loss.

Simon exclaimed cheerfully: "You 're a lucky dog, Levi Matthew! What other men give up with difficulty has run away from you of itself."

That day the toll-house was left deserted, and the passers-by were surprised to find that the road between Magdala and Tiberias was free.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

In this way there gathered round the carpenter of Nazareth more disciples and friends, who wished to accompany Him in His wanderings through the land. For Jesus had decided. He desired only to wander through the land and bring men tidings of the heavenly Father and of the Kingdom of God. He appointed some of His disciples to prepare for Him a reception and lodging everywhere. Then there were the assemblies of the people to regulate; and the disciples, so far as they themselves understood the new teaching, must act as interpreters and expositors for those who could not understand the Master's peculiar language. Among those was John, the carpenter, who had once been an apprentice to Jesus, a near relative of the Master. Other of His disciples were called James, he was the boat-builder; then Simon, Andrew, and Thomas, the fishermen; Levi Matthew, the publican; Thaddeus, the saddler; and further — but my memory is weak — James, the little shepherd; Nathan, the potter; and his brother Philip, the innkeeper from Jericho; Bartholomew, the smith; and Judas, the money-changer from Carioth. Like Simon and Matthew, they had all left their trades or offices to follow with boundless devotion Him they called Lord and Master.

How shall I dare to describe the Master! His personality defies description. It left none cold who came in contact with it. It was attractive not only by humility and gentleness, but more by active power, and by such sacred and fiery anger as had never before been seen in any one. People were never tired of looking at the man with the tall, handsome figure. His head was crowned with lightly curling, reddish, bright-looking hair, which hung down soft and heavy at the side and back, and floated over His shoulders. His brow was broad and white, for no sunbeam could penetrate the shade formed by His hair. He had a strong, straight nose, more like that of a Greek than of a Jew, and His red lips were shaded with a thick beard. And His eyes were wonderful, large, dark eyes, with a marvellous fire in them. Ordinarily it was a fire that burnt warm and soft, but at times it shone with a great glow of happiness, or sparkled with anger, like a midsummer storm by night in the mountains of Lebanon. On that account many called Him "fiery eye." He wore a long, straight gown, without hat or staff. He generally wore sandals on His feet, but sometimes He forgot to put them on, for in His spiritual communings He did not perceive the roughness of the road. So He wandered through the stony desert, as through the flowery meadows of the fertile valleys. When His companions complained of the storm or heat, and tore their limbs on the sharp stones and thorns, He remained calm and uncomplaining. He did not, like the holy men of the East, seek for hardships, but He did not fear them. He was an enemy of all external trappings, because they distracted the attention from the inner life,

and by their attractions might induce a false appearance of reality. He gladly received invitations to the houses of the joyful, and rejoiced with them; at table He ate and drank with moderation. He added to the pleasures of the table by narrating parables and legends, by means of which He brought deep truths home to the people. Since He left the little house at Nazareth, He possessed no worldly goods. What He needed in His wanderings for Himself and His followers, He asked of those who had possessions. His manner was often rough and spiced with bitter irony, even where He proved Himself helpful and sympathetic. Towards His disciples, whom He loved deeply — especially young John — He always showed Himself absorbed in His mission to make strong, courageous, God-fearing men out of weak creatures. He was so definite about what He liked and what He disliked, that even the blindest could see it. He suffered no compromise between good and evil. He specially disliked ambiguous speakers, hypocrites, and sneaks; He preferred to have to do with avowed sinners.

One of His fundamental traits was to be yielding in disposition, but unflinching in His teaching. He avoided all personal dislikes, hatreds, all that might poison the heart. His soul was trust and kindness. So high did He rank kindness, and so heavily did He condemn selfishness, that one of His disciples said, to sin from kindness brought a man nearer to God than to do good through selfishness. The hostility and reverses He met with He turned into a source of happiness. Happiness! Did not that word come into the world with Jesus?

"He is always talking of being happy," some one

once said to John. "What do you understand by being happy?"

And John: "When you feel quite contented inwardly, so that no worldly desire or bitterness disturbs your peace, when all within you is love and trust, as though you were at rest in the eternity of God and nothing can trouble you any more, that is, as I take it, what He means by being happy. But it cannot be put into words, only he who feels it understands."

And Jesus possessed, too, the high sense of communion with God, which He transmitted to all who followed Him. But I should like to add that where Jesus was most divine, there He was most human. In thrusting from Him all worldly desire, all worldly property, and worldly care, He freed Himself from the burden which renders most men unhappy. In communion with God He was at once a simple child, and a wise man of the world. No anxiety existed about accidents, perils, loss and ruin. Everything happened according to His will, because it was the will of God, and He enjoyed life with simplicity and a pure heart. Is not that the true human lot? And does not such a natural, glad life come very near to the Divine?

Thus, then, He followed the Divine path across that historic ground which will be known as the Holy Land to the end of time.

And now that great day, that great Sabbath morning came.

For a long time damp, grey mists had hung over the valleys of Galilee; banks of fog had hovered over the mountains of Lebanon; showers of cold rain fell. But

after the gloom dawned a bright spring morning. From the rocky heights a fertile land was visible. Green meadows watered by shining streams adorned the valleys, and groups of pines, fig-trees, olive-trees, and cedars, the slopes and the hilltops. Vines and dewy roses were in the hedges. A full-voiced choir of birds and fresh breezes from the Lake filled the soft air. Westwards the blue waters of the Mediterranean might be discerned, and in the east, through distant clefts in the rocks, the shimmer of the Dead Sea. Southwards lay the plain, and the yellowish mounds which marked the beginning of the desert. And towards the west the snow peaks of Lebanon were visible above the dark forest and the lighter green of the slopes. A perfect sunny peacefulness lay over everything.

The flat rocks of the gentler slopes were crowded with people, many of whom had never seen this district. And they still came from every village and farm. Instead of going as usual to the synagogue, they hastened to this mountain height. Instead of seeking soft repose, as their desire of comfort bade them, they hurried thither over stocks and stones. Instead of visiting friend or neighbour they all climbed the heights together. For they knew that Jesus was there, and would speak. And so they stood or sat on the flat stones — men and women, old and young, rich and poor. Many only came out of curiosity, and passed the time in witty sallies; others jested together; others, again, waited in silent expectation. Those who already knew Him whispered excitedly, and Simon said to James: "My heart has never beat as violently as to-day."

And Jesus seated himself under a tree near the summit of the mountain. As if all men were turned to

stone at sight of Him, a silence and stillness now took the place of the subdued murmur of the crowd. In His long, light coloured gown He seemed like a white statue against the blue sky. His right hand was uplifted, the left lay motionless upon His knee.

He began to speak softly, but clearly. Not in the even tone of a preacher, but quickly and eagerly, often hesitating a moment while collecting His thoughts for a pregnant saying. It was not as if he had thought out His speech beforehand, or learned it out of books. What His own individual temperament had originated, what time had matured in Him, He poured forth in the rush of the Holy Spirit.

"I am sent to make appeal to you. I come to all, but especially to the poor. I come to the afflicted, to the distressed, to the sick, to the imprisoned, to the cast down. I come with glad tidings from the heavenly Father."

After this introduction He, in His humility, looked out into the great world of Nature, as if she would supply Him with words. But Nature was silent; indeed, at that hour, all creatures were silent and listened.

Then Jesus lifted His eyes to the crowd, and began to speak as men had never heard any one speak before.

"Brothers! Rejoice! Again I say, Rejoice! A good Father lives in heaven. His presence is everywhere, His power is boundless, and we are His children whom He loves. He makes His sun to shine over all; He overlooks no one. He sees into the dark recesses of all hearts, and no one can move a hair's breadth without His consent. He places freely before men happiness and eternal life. Listen to what I say to you in His name:

"All ye children of men who seek salvation, come to Me. I bless the poor, for no earthly burden can keep them from the Kingdom of Heaven. I bless the suffering, the afflicted, disappointed — abandoned by the world they take refuge in life in God. I bless the kind-hearted and the peace-loving. Their hearts are not troubled with hate and guilt; they live as happy children of God. I bless those who love justice, for they are God's companions, and shall find justice. I bless the pure in heart. No bewildering desire obscures the face of God from them. I bless the merciful. Sympathetic love gives strength, brings compassion where it is needed. And blessed, thrice blessed, are you who suffer persecution for the sake of righteousness. Yours is the Kingdom of Heaven. Rejoice and be glad, all of you — no eye hath yet seen, no ear hath yet heard the joys that are laid up for you in heaven. Now hear My mission. Many say I wish to change the old laws. That is not so. I come to fulfil the old laws, but according to the spirit, not according to the letter. The learned men who preach in the synagogues fulfil it according to the letter, and desire to guide the people; but if you do as they, you will not be righteous, nor will you find the Kingdom of God. The wise men say, you shall not kill. I say, you shall not get angry, or be contemptuous. He who grows angry and censorious, shall himself be judged. Your pious gifts are of no avail if you live at enmity with your neighbour. In the laws of the sages it is written, you shall not commit adultery. I say, you shall not even think of breaking your marriage vows. Rather should you become blind than let your eye desire your neighbour's wife. Better lose your

sight than your purity. Rather cut off your hand than reach it after your neighbour's goods. Better lose your strength than your virtue. It is said in the Law, you shall not swear falsely. I say, you shall not swear at all, either by God, or by your soul, or by your child. Yes or no, that is enough. Now say whether I change the laws. Rather do I desire the strictest obedience to them. But there are laws which I do change. Listen: An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. I say you shall not treat your adversary in a hostile fashion. What you can in justice do for yourself, that do, but go no farther; it is a thousand times better to suffer wrong than to do wrong. Overcome your enemy with kindness. If any one smites you on the right cheek, keep your temper and offer him the left. Maybe that will disarm his wrath. If any one tears off your coat ask him kindly if he would not like the undergarment too? Perhaps he will be ashamed of his greediness. If any asks you for something that you can grant, do not refuse him, and if you have two coats give one to him who has none. In the law of the sages it is said: Love your neighbour; hate your enemy. That is false. For it is easy enough to love them that love you, and hate them that hate you. The godless can manage so much. I tell you, love your neighbour, and also love your enemy. Listen, my brothers, and declare it throughout the whole world what I now say to you: Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you."

He stopped, and a stir went through the assembly. Words had been spoken the like of which had not before been heard in the world. A holy inspiration, as it were,

entered the universe at that hour such as had not been felt since the creation.

Jesus continued speaking: "Do good to those who hate you; that is how God acts towards men even when they mock at Him. Try to imitate the Father in heaven in all things. What good ye do, do it for the sake of God, not for the sake of men. Therefore the second commandment is as important as the first. Love God more than everything, and your neighbour as yourself. But you shall not boast of your good works. When you give alms, do it secretly, and speak not of it, so that the left hand knows not what the right hand doeth. If you do not give up the goods of this world, you will not attain to the Kingdom of Heaven. If you fast, do not wear a sad face. Be cheerful; what matters it that others should know that you fast? If you do not keep the Sabbath holy, you cannot see the Father. But when you pray, do it secretly in your chamber; you are nearest your Father in heaven in quiet humility. Use not many words in your praying as idolaters do. Not he who constantly praises the Lord finds Him, but he who does His will. Lift up your heart in trust, and submit to the will of Him who is in heaven. Honour His name, seek His kingdom. Ask pardon for your own fault, and be careful to pardon him who offends against you. Ask that you may receive what you require for your needs each day, so that you may find strength against temptation, and freedom from impatience and evil desire. If you pray thus, your prayer will be heard; for he who asks in the right way shall receive, and for him who continually knocks shall the gate be opened. Is there a father among you who would give his child a

stone when he asks for bread? And if a poor man grants his child's request, how much more the mighty, good Father in heaven. But be not too anxious for your daily needs: such anxiety spoils pure pleasure. If you heap up material goods, then death comes. Gather not the treasures which pass away; gather spiritual treasures to your inner profit, treasures which your heavenly Father stores up unto life eternal. Such a store will benefit the souls of those who come after you. Man is so fashioned that his heart always inclines to his possessions; if his possessions are with God, then will his heart be with God. He who is for the body cannot be for the soul, because he cannot serve two masters. Earn for the day what ye need for the day, but take no care for the morrow. Be not anxious about what you shall eat to-morrow, about how you shall be clothed in the years to come. Trust in Him who feeds the birds and makes the flowers bloom. Shall not the heavenly Father have greater love for the children of men than for the sparrow or the lily? Do not burden your life with cares, but be glad, glad, glad in God, your Father. Set your minds on the Kingdom of Heaven; all else is second to that. . . . I observe, my brothers, that these words come home to you; but first see if the teacher follows His own precepts. Beware of preachers, wolves in sheep's clothing, who live otherwise than they teach. Whoever speaks to you in My name, look first at his works, as ye recognize the tree by its fruit. Judge men according to their works, but do not condemn them! Before you condemn, remember that you yourself may be condemned. As you judge others so shall you yourself be judged. How often, my friend, do

you see a mote in your brother's eye, while you do not see a whole beam in your own eye. Get rid of your own faults before you censure the faults of your brother. The path which leads to salvation is narrow, and while you escape the abyss on the left hand you may fall into that on the right. And that you may proceed in safety along the narrow way, give heed to My words: *Everything that you wish to be done unto you, that do unto others.* Now, My brothers and sisters, in the land of our fathers, let those of you who must return to your work, return and ponder on the message I have brought you. Every one who has heard it, and does not live according to it, is like the man who builds his house on sand; but he who lives in accordance with this teaching builds his house on the rocks, and no storm can destroy it. The words that I deliver to you in the name of the heavenly Father will outlast all the wisdom of the earth. He who hears and does not heed is lost to Me; he who follows My teaching will attain eternal life."

Thus ended the speech which became one of the greatest events of the world. Many were terrified by the concluding sentences, for they heard the word but were too weak to follow it. Their cowardice did not escape Jesus, and because He could not let any depart uncomforted, they seemed to hear Him murmur: "The Kingdom of Heaven belongs to those who untiringly reach out after it. Blessed are the weak whose will is good."

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

That Sabbath of the Sermon on the Mount became a most important day. When Jesus made an end of speaking the people did not disperse, but pressed round Him to kiss the hem of His garment. Many who until then had been in despair could not tear themselves from Him. They wished to follow him wherever He went, and to share His destiny. Whatever He might say to the contrary, that destiny, they felt sure, would be brilliant. Was He not tearing the masses from earthly thoughts that formed their curse. All they heard was His counsel upon absence of anxiety. But what would it be when He revealed the universal power of the Messiah? Many said that the Sermon on the Mount was a trial of strength intended to steel the will for the holy struggle for the Kingdom of the Messiah that was now to be established on earth.

People came out of Judæa; they hastened from the valley of the Jordan; they streamed from the hills. They came from the seaports of Tyre and Sidon, and some even came from the lands far beyond the sea in order to discover if what the people on all sides were saying was true. They brought asses and camels, laden with gifts, and Jesus accepted what He and His friends needed,

but declined the rest, or divided it among the people. For there were many among His followers who were starving His word being all their sustenance. And sick persons began to drag themselves to Him so that He might heal and comfort them. But the more they heard of miracles wrought on the sick and crippled, the more miracles they desired, so that He grew angry, and reminded them that He did not come on account of their bodies but of their souls. Moreover, He pointed out to them that He was not the Messiah from whom men expected deliverance and the establishment of the kingdom of the Jews. But they regarded that as an excuse, as prudent reserve, until the time was ripe for the entry of the great general. The curiosity increased at every new speech, and they hoped to hear Him sound the call to arms. Others held aloof and thought over the deeper meaning of His words, and if it was possible to comprehend them and live according to them. At first they found it easy and pleasant to be free from care, and to be conciliatory towards their neighbours. It suited the poor admirably to make a virtue of necessity, so that their indolence and poverty appeared as meritorious. But after a few days they began to realize that perhaps they had not understood the Master's words aright. Even the Samaritans from over the border listened to the strange teaching about heaven on earth. If the ancient writings spoke of future blessedness, Jesus spoke of present blessedness.

A money-changer from Carioth was among His disciples. So far he had only been with the Prophet on Sabbaths; on week-days he sat in his office and counted money and reckoned interest. But things did not go well,

for while he was doing his accounts his thoughts were with the Master, and he made errors; and when he was with the Master his thoughts were with his money, and he missed what was being said. He must leave either one or the other, and he could not decide which. But after listening to the Sermon on the Mount he determined to go no more to his place of business, but to remain with Jesus, so strong was his belief in Him. And the exchange brought as much joy into his heart as if he had lent money to a man at two hundred per cent. For he would have treasure in the Kingdom of the Messiah.

The only people who more or less still held aloof were the Galileans. They had known the Prophet as a carpenter, and were uncertain what position to take up towards Him. On the other hand, there were Galileans who came to Jerusalem, or Joppa, and were proud to hear their Prophet spoken of there, and they pretended to be His acquaintances and friends, only to greet Him on their return with the same old contempt. He used to say that no man was a prophet in his own country. At this period Jesus often went to Nazareth, and always accompanied by an ever-increasing number of followers. His mother could never get any confidential talk with Him. And His native place disowned Him. His youthful acquaintances fought shy of him as an eccentric vagrant who opposed the law, stirred up the people, and from whose further career no great honour was to be expected. The Rabbi in the synagogue warned men of Him as of a public traitor. He described with ardent zeal the ruin in which all would be involved who were persuaded by this man without a conscience to renounce the belief of their

ancestors. "There is only one true faith," he exclaimed, "and only one God, and that is not the faith and God of this heretic, but the faith of Moses and the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And that God curses the false prophet and all his followers, so that the devil has power over him." And he continued sorrowfully: "His relations are greatly to be pitied, especially the unhappy mother who has borne such a son to the shame of the family and the grief of the whole land." And then the Rabbi alluded to a hope that they might perhaps succeed in bringing to reason the erring man who sinned so deeply against the law, if not by love, at least by a vigorous effort and display of authority, till He is made to resume the honourable handicraft in which He had once lived in a manner pleasing to God.

And so it happened that Mary, when she left the synagogue and proceeded homewards, was scoffed at by her ill-natured neighbours, who gave her to understand that she might take herself off, and the sooner the better. She said nothing, but bade her weeping heart be still.

One day Jesus was invited to dine down by the lake with a friend who held the same views as Himself. There were so many people present that there was neither room nor food enough. They expected some miracle. Jesus was in a happy mood, and said that He wondered that people should rush after little wonders, and overlook the great ones; for all things that lived, all things with which we were daily surrounded, were pure and incomprehensible wonders. As for the wonders men desired Him to work, the most important thing was not the turning of stones into bread or the making of the sick

whole, but that such miracles should awaken faith. Faith was the greatest miracle worker. While He was talking He was called away; some one stood under the cedars who wished to speak to Him. He found two of His relations there, who asked Him curtly, and without ceremony, what He purposed doing: did He propose to return to Nazareth or not? If not, then He had better realize that his house and workshop would be confiscated.

Jesus answered them: "Go and tell your elders in Nazareth: The house belongs to him who needs it, and let him who has a use for the workshop have it. And leave Him in peace who would build a House in which there are many mansions."

They remained standing there, and said: "If you turn a deaf ear and are heedless of us, there is some one else here." And then His mother came forward. She had thrown a blue shawl over her head. She looked ill, and could hardly speak for sobbing. She took hold of His hand: "My son! where will all this lead? Can you undertake such responsibility? You reject the belief of your fathers, and you deprive others of it."

To which He replied: "I deprive them of their belief! On the contrary, I give them faith."

"But, my child, I can't understand it. You are stirring up the whole country. The people leave their houses, their families, their work, to follow you. What enchantment do you practise on them?"

"They follow the tidings," He said. "They thirst after comfort as the heart pants for water."

"And you call it comfort to starve and freeze in the wilderness," broke in one of his relations; "you call it

comfort to deny oneself everything till our rags fall off our bodies, and we are taken by the soldiers as criminals? Take heed. The governors at Cæsarea and Jerusalem are displeased at the state of affairs. They mean to put a stop to the demagogue's proceedings, and they are right."

"Who is the demagogue?"

"Why, you, of course."

Jesus was surprised at the reply, and said: — "I? I, who say to you, 'Peace be with you! Love one another! Do good to your enemies!' I, a demagogue?"

"They say you claim to be the Messiah who shall conquer the kingdom."

"A kingdom that is not of this world."

Mary fell into His arms. "My dear son, leave all this alone. If it is to be, God will do it all without you. See how lonely your mother is at Nazareth! Come with me to our peaceful home, and be once again my good, dear Jesus. And these here, they love you, they are your brothers."

Then Jesus stretched out His arm and pointed to His followers, who had pushed their way into the house. "Those are My brothers! Those who acknowledge the heavenly Father as I do, they are My brothers."

His relations stepped back, and wrung their hands in perplexity. "He is out of His mind, He is possessed by devils."

The people in the road who were looking over the fence felt sorry for the forsaken woman, and wanted to interfere; whereupon a voice exclaimed loudly: "Happy the mother who has such a son! The nations will arise and call her blessed!"

Jesus turned to them gravely. "Blessed are those who follow the word of God."

His mother felt, as He spoke those words, as if she had been stabbed to the heart with a sword. The people were silent, and whispered to each other: "Why is He so hard towards His mother?"

John the younger answered them: "He sees salvation only in God the Father. He has converted many people to His view, but just those whom He loves best will not listen to the tidings of the Kingdom of Heaven."

Jesus lifted up His voice and cried: "He who desires to be My disciple, and his parents and brothers and sisters do not believe in Me, he must forsake his parents and brothers and sisters in order to follow Me. He who has wife and child, and they despise My tidings, he must forsake wife and child and follow *Me* if he wishes to be My disciple. Who does not love God more than mother and child, than brother and sister, yea, more than himself and his life, he is not worthy of God."

Many were troubled by this speech, and murmured: "He asks too much."

Then said John: "Whoever is in earnest about his faith in the heavenly Father cannot speak otherwise. He feels Himself how hard it is to destroy all ties. Do you not observe how He struggles with Himself, and must subdue His own heart, so that it may lose its power over Him? He asks all from His disciples because He gives them all. We already know that what He has to give us is worth more than all we have given up."

His relations went away. They talked violently against Jesus. His mother could not endure that, so she remain-

ed behind and climbed the stony path by herself. In her sorely tried heart she prayed: "My Father which art in heaven, Thy will be done!" And she had no idea that it was here son's prayer, in which she found the same faith and comfort as He did. She knew not that thus she, too, became a disciple of Jesus.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

ELSEWHERE Jesus's fame had become so great that all men came to Him. The poor crowded to Him in order to eat at His table where the word had become flesh. The rich invited Him to their houses, but He mostly declined those invitations, accepting, however, one here and there.

He Himself went to those who humbly remained in the background and yet desired to go to Him. A man lived in the district whose greatest desire was to see the Prophet. When he heard that Jesus was coming his way, he began to tremble and to think what he should do. "I should like to meet Him face to face, and yet dare not venture to go to Him. For I have a bad reputation as a publican, and am not worth much any way. Then He is always accompanied by so many people, and I am short and cannot see over their heads." When Jesus approached, the man climbed a bare sycamore-tree and peeped between the branches. Jesus saw him, and called out: "Zacchæus, come down from the tree! I will come and visit you to-day."

The publican jumped down from the tree and went over to Him, and said humbly: "Lord I am not worthy that you should go to my house. Only say one word to me, and I shall be content."

The people wondered that the Prophet should so honour this person of somewhat doubtful character. Zacchæus was almost beside himself to think that the Master should have recognized and spoken to him. He set before his guest everything that his house afforded. Jesus said: "These things are good. But I want the most precious thing you possess."

"What is that, sir?" asked Zacchæus in terror, for he thought he had given of his best. "Everything I possess is yours."

Then Jesus grasped his hand, looked at him lovingly, and said: "Zacchæus, give me your heart!"

The man became His follower.

One day He was dining with a man who was very learned and a strict censor of morals. Several of His disciples were among the guests, and the talk, partly intellectual and partly guided by feeling, turned on the Scriptures. At first Jesus took no part; He was thinking how much pleasanter it would be to hear simple talk at His mother's fireside at home than to dispute with these arrogant scholars about the empty letter. But He was soon drawn into the conversation. Some one mentioned the commandment which enjoins a man to love his neighbour, and, as often happens, the simplest things became confused and incomprehensible in the varied opinions of the worldly-wise. One of the guests said: "It is remarkable how we do not reflect on the most important things because they are so clear; and yet if we do reflect on them by any chance, we don't understand them. So that I really do not know who it is I should love as myself."

"Your neighbour!" the disciple Matthew, who was sitting by him at table, informed him.

"That is all right, my friend, if only I knew who was my neighbour! I run up against all sorts of people in the day, and if one of them trips me up, he is my neighbour for the time being. At this moment I have two neighbours, you and Zachariah. Which of the two am I to love as myself? It is only stated that you shall love one. And if it 's you or Zachariah, why should I love either of you more than the Master who sits at the other end of the table and is not my neighbour!"

"Man! that is an impertinent speech," said the disciple Bartholomew reprovingly.

"Well then, put me right!" retorted the other.

The disciple began, and tried to explain who the neighbour was, but he did not get very far, his thoughts were confused. Meanwhile the question had reached the Master. Who is, in the correct sense of the term, one's neighbour?

Jesus answered, by telling a story: "There was once a man who went from Jerusalem to Jericho. It was a lonely road, and he was attacked by highwaymen, who plundered him, beat him, and left him for dead. After a while a high priest came by that way, saw him lying there, and noticing that he was a stranger, passed quickly on. A little later an assistant priest came by, saw him lying there, and thought: He 's either severely wounded or dead, but I 'm not going to put myself out for a stranger; and he passed on. At last there came one of the despised Samaritans. He saw the helpless creature, stopped, and had pity on him. He revived him with wine, put healing salve on

his wounds, lifted him up, and carried him to the nearest inn. He gave the host money to take care of the sufferer until he recovered. Now, what do you say? The priests regarded him as a stranger, but the Samaritan saw in him his neighbour."

Then they explained it to themselves: Your neighbour is one whom you can help and who is waiting for your help.

The disciple Thomas now joined in the conversation, and doubted if you could expect a great prince to dismount from his horse and lift a poor beggar out of the gutter.

Jesus asked: "If you rode by as a great prince and found Me lying wretchedly in the gutter, would you leave me lying there?"

"Master!" shouted Thomas in horror.

"Do you see, Thomas? What you would do to the poorest, you would do to Me."

One of the others asked: "Are we only to be kind to the poor, and not to the rich and noble?"

And Jesus said: "If you are a beggar in the street, and a prince comes riding past, there 's nothing you can do for him. But if his horse stumbles and he falls, then catch him so that his head may not stirke against a stone. At that moment he becomes your neighbour."

Then some whispered: "It often seems as if He desired us to love all men. But that is too difficult."

"It 's very easy, brother," said Bartholomew. "To love the millions of men whom you never see, who do not do you any harm, that costs nothing. Hypocrites love in

that way. Yet while they claim to love the whole human race, they are hard on their neighbour."

"It is easy to love from afar," said Jesus, "and it is easy to love good-tempered and amiable men. But how is it when your brother has wronged you, and is always trying to do you harm? You must forgive him, not seven times, but seventy times seven. Go to him in kindness, show him his error. If he listens to you, then you have won him. If he does not heed you, repeat your warning. If still he heeds you not, seek a friendly intermediary. If he will not heed him, then let the community decide. And only when you see your brother saved and contented will you be glad again."

While they were talking thus, a young woman pushed her way into the room. She was one of those who followed Him everywhere, and waited impatiently at the door while the Master visited a house. Bending low, almost unnoticed, she hurried through the crowd, stooped down before Jesus, and began to rub His feet with ointment from a casket. He calmly permitted it; but His host thought to himself: No, He is no prophet, or He would know who it is that is anointing His feet. Is n't she the sinner of Magdala?

Jesus guessed his thoughts, and said: "My friend, I will tell you something. Here is a man who has two debtors. One owes him fifty pence, and the other five hundred. But as they cannot pay he cancels both the debts. Now say, which of them owes him most gratitude?"

"Naturally him to whom the most was remitted," answered the host.

And Jesus: "You are right. Much has been remitted to this woman. See, you invited Me to your house, your servants have filled the room with the scent of roses, although fresh air comes in through the windows. My ear has been charmed with the strains of sweet bells, and stringed instruments, although the clear song of birds can be heard from without. You have given Me wine in costly crystal goblets, although I am accustomed to drink out of earthen vessels. But that My feet might feel sore after the long wandering across the desert only this woman remembered. She has much love, therefore much will be forgiven her."

One day when the Master had gone down to Capernaum He noticed that the disciples who were walking in front of Him were engaged in quiet but animated talk. They were discussing which of them was most pleasing to God. Each subtly brought forward his meritorious services to the Master, his sacrifices, his renunciations and sufferings, his obedience to the teaching. Jesus quickly stepped nearer to them, and said: "Why do you indulge in such foolish talk? While you are boasting of your virtues, you prove that you lack the greatest. Are you the righteous that you dare to talk so loudly?"

Whereupon one of them answered timidly: "No, sir, we are not the righteous. But you yourself said that there was more rejoicing in heaven over penitents than over righteous men."

"There is rejoicing over penitents when they are humble. But do you know over whom there is greater rejoicing in heaven?"

By this time a crowd had formed round Him. Women

The Blessing of the Children

The Blessing of the Waters

had come up leading little children by the hand and carrying smaller ones in their arms in order to show them the marvellous man. Some of the boys got through between the people's legs to the front in order to see Him and kiss the hem of his garment. The people tried to keep them back so that they should not trouble the Master, but He stood under the fig-tree and exclaimed in a loud voice: "Suffer the little ones to come unto Me!" Then round-faced, curly-headed, bright-eyed children ran forward, their skirts flying, and crowded about Him, some merry, others shy, and embarrassed. He sat down on the grass, drew the children to His side, and took the smallest in His lap. They looked up in His kind face with wide-opened eyes. He played with them, and they smiled tenderly or laughed merrily. And they played with His curls, and flung their arms round His neck. They were so trustful and happy, these little creatures hovering so brightly round the Prophet, that the crowd stood in silent joy. But Jesus was so filled with blessed gladness that He exclaimed loudly: "This is the Kingdom of Heaven!"

The words swept over the crowd like the scent of the hawthorn. But some were afraid when the Master added: "See how innocent and glad they are. I tell you that he who is not like a little child, he shall not enter the Kingdom of Heaven! And woe to him who deceives one of these children! it were better he tied a millstone round his neck and were drowned in the sea! But whosoever accepts a child for My sake accepts Me!"

Then the disciples thought they understood over whom there was joy in heaven, and they disputed no longer over their own merits.

CHAPTER TWENTY

GALILEE was rich in poor men and poor in rich men. And it might have been thought that Jesus, the friend of the poor, was the right man in the right place there. And yet His teaching took no hold in that land. A few rich men among a multitude of poor have all the more power because they are few, and they used all their influence with the people to dethrone the Prophet from His height, and to undermine His career. These illustrious men found their best tools in the Rabbis, who circulated the sophism that the people who followed the teaching of this man must quickly come to ruin. For the poor, who willingly gave up their last possessions, must become poorer, and the rich, who pursued their advantages, must become still richer, which implied that not the rich but only the poor would accept the Prophet's teaching, since we know that Jesus especially called on the rich to alter the tenor of their ways, and always for the benefit of the poor. But, they answered: The rich will not alter the tenor of their ways, they will consume the gentle disciples of Jesus, as the wolf the sheep. Many were impressed by that view, and lost courage: The Prophet means well, they reflected, but nothing is to be gained by adopting His methods

Then it became known that Jesus had allowed Himself to be anointed. To allow Himself to be anointed meant that He regarded Himself as the heaven-sent Messiah! And that was hostile to the existing order of things, to the king. So said the preachers in the synagogues, the houses, and the streets, but they were silent over the fact that the anointing was the work of a poor woman who desired to heal His sore feet. In fact, the preachers cared nothing for the people or the king, but only for the letter of the law.

When the women who had anointed His feet saw that He was despised because of her, she went silently apart by herself. No human being cared so much for Him, and none left Him so calmly. She did not go back to the old man she had married out of pity, and forgotten — out of love, but she went to relations at Bethany. Since the Prophet had raised her up before all the people, her relatives no longer closed their doors to her, but received her kindly.

Jesus was aware how His native ground tottered under His feet, how the people began to shun Him more and more, how the inns made difficulties about receiving Him. So He went, with those who were true to Him, out into the rocky desert of Judæa. He gained new adherents on the way, and people came from the surrounding places with pack and staff to hear the wonderful preacher. Some had had enough of the barren wisdom of the Pharisees, others were disgusted with the bad administration of the country, and with the fine promises of the Romans, they were ruined by the agricultural depression, or in despair over the low level of men's minds, over the

barbarism of men. There were some, too, who had fled before the robber bands of Barabbas which infested the desert to their undoing. They came into His presence, hungering for the living word on which to feed their starving souls John said to them: "His teaching is nourishment. His word is flesh. Who eats of His flesh and drinks of His blood will not die."

They wondered at those words. How were they to understand what was meant by eating His flesh and drinking His blood?

Then John: "The word is like flesh, it nourishes the soul. Manna was sent from heaven for our ancestors, yet they died. His word is bread from heaven which makes us immortal." They remembered another saying: "His flesh is food indeed!" And they explained that a man's body is destined to be consumed by the spirit, like tallow and wick by flame. So man, in order to become divine, must attain the divine life through the medium of humanity.

They remained with Him day and night in their thousands, and were satisfied. And many entreated Him to pour water over their heads as a token that they were his adherents and desired to be pure.

It was a starry night in the desert, one of those nights when the stars shine down in sparkling brilliance and envelop the rocks in a bluish shimmer and vapour, so that it seems like a resurrection of glorified souls. One of the disciples looked up at the stars shining in the sky in holy stillness, and said: "Brother, this infinitude of space makes me afraid."

The other disciple: "I rejoice over that infinite space."

"My terror causes me to flee to my heavenly Father."

"I take my joy to my heavenly Father."

They were all lying on the ground in a wide circle round Jesus. They wished to rest, but the night was too beautiful for sleep.

And one of them began to say softly: "This is like the Kingdom of God."

Another lifted his head, which had been resting on his arm, and said: "Do you know, then, what the Kingdom of God is like?"

The first speaker was silent for a space, and then replied: "No, indeed, I don't know, but I like to think about it. He speaks so often of the Kingdom of Heaven. I should like to know something more definite about it."

"Shall we ask Him?"

"You ask Him."

"I dare not."

"Let us ask John. He knows Him best, and possibly can tell us something."

John was lying on the sand with his head on a stone. His soft hair was his pillow. But he was not asleep. They crept up to him, and boldly asked him where the Kingdom of Heaven was, of which the Master so often spoke. Was it under the earth or above the sun? Would it begin soon — or in a thousand years?"

John said: "How long have you been with Him?"

"Seven weeks."

"And you don't know yet where the Kingdom of Heaven is? Then you do not understand His language."

"He speaks the language of our fathers."

"He speaks the language of the Kingdom of God. Remember the Kingdom of Heaven is where God is. God is where Love is, where trustful, self-sacrificing, glad Love is."

"And where is that?"

"Where do you think?"

"I think Love must be in the heart."

Whereupon John answered: "Then you do know where the Kingdom of Heaven is."

The two looked at each other, but did not quite seem to know. Then John went to Jesus, who was sitting on a rock and looking out into the darkness as if it was full of visions. His countenance was as bright as if the stars had lent it their brilliance.

"Master," said John, "we cannot sleep. Tell us of the Kingdom of Heaven."

Jesus turned round, and pointing to the disciple nearest him, said: "To you is it granted to know the Kingdom of Heaven. To the others it can only be explained through parables. For the Kingdom of God is not built of wood or stone like a temple, it cannot be conquered like an earthly empire, it cannot be seen by mortal eyes like a garden of flowers, neither can we say it is here or there. The Kingdom of God must be conquered with the power of the will, and he who is strong and constant will gain it. His eye and his hand must be continually set to the plough which makes furrows in the kingdom of earth for the great harvest. He who sets his hand to the plough, and looks at something else, he is not dedicated to the Kingdom of God. But to him who earnestly seeks it, it comes overnight. The seed thrown on the field yes-

terday has sprung up — man knows not how. The seed is the Word of God which was scattered on all sides. Part falls on the wayside, and the birds devour it. Part falls among thorns, and is choked. A part falls on a thin covering of earth, it comes up but is parched by the hot sun. Only a very small quantity falls on rich earth and bears much fruit. So it is with the tidings of God. Evil inclinations devour it, earthly cares choke it, burning passions parch it, but the heart that desires God receives it, and with him the word becomes the Kingdom of Heaven."

More and more heads were lifted up. "He is speaking." Then all bestirred themselves and listened.

Jesus raised His voice and went on: "Some of you who listen to Me have the Kingdom of Heaven within you. But be careful! The enemy comes in the night and sows weeds. Hear more. The word is like a grain of mustard-seed. It is the smallest of all seeds, and yet it becomes the biggest tree. Perhaps without your knowledge a word has fallen into your heart. You are scarcely aware of it, you pass it by, but it grows secretly, and all at once enlightenment is there, and you have the Kingdom of Heaven. Then, again, it is like yeast, and stirs up and changes your whole being. The Kingdom of Heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. A man finds it and buys the field. And it is like a pearl for which a merchant gives all his wealth. But it is also like a lamp which a man must feed with oil lest it be extinguished. If it goes out, you will have no light, and suddenly comes the attack. And hear this also: the Lord of the Kingdom of Heaven is like a king who at urgent request remits all his

slave's debts. But the slave does not remit his debtor's debt, but lets him be cast into prison. So the king summons him before his judgment-seat and says: I have shown you mercy, and you have shown your fellow no mercy. So now I shall have you put upon the rack until you have paid me your debts to the last farthing. Who does not show mercy to others, to him shall no mercy be shown."

Jesus was silent, and a shudder of terror passed through the crowd. John went to the man who had just questioned Him, and said: "Do you understand now what He means by the Kingdom of God?"

"I think so."

"That is enough for the present. It is mercy, blessedness, and justice. . . . Consider, it was night He chose in order to unveil the Kingdom of Heaven. For it is not visible to the outward eye, but to the inward eye. Man, if you possess the Kingdom of Heaven, you possess it in your soul. If it is not there, you seek it elsewhere in vain."

"But," some one ventured to say hesitatingly, "it must also be somewhere else. The Master Himself says: 'Father who art in heaven.'"

John answered him: "The Kingdom of Heaven is wherever you are, wherever you come with your faith and with your love. Only do not think that you are obliged to understand such mysteries with your reason."

And the man asked no more.

Then an old man tottered up and ventured to ask Jesus what he should do. He was a worldly man, had never

lived save for earth, and he was told it was now too late to change. "How shall I reach the Kingdom of Heaven?"

Then Jesus spoke as follows:

"There was once a man who employed labourers for his vineyard. He engaged one in the morning, another at noon, and the last towards evening when the day's work was almost over. And when the pay-hour came round, he gave each good wages. Then those who had been hired in the morning and at noon complained that they had worked much longer in the toil and heat of the day, and ought therefore to receive more wages than he who only began towards evening, and had scarcely laboured for an hour. Then said the master of the vineyard: 'I told you beforehand the wages I should give you, and you were content. What is it to you how much I give the other? Let him come to me late, or let him come to me as soon as it it morning. The chief thing is that he comes to me.'"

Then the old man began to weep for joy that although he came so late to the vineyard of Jesus, he would still be employed.

Since the Master was so ready to speak, others came to Him at this time, and entreated Him to clear up some matters which they did not understand. Once He related a story of a king who, when the guests he had invited to his wedding-feast refused to come, invited the people out of the highways. They came, but one had not a wedding garment on, and the king ordered him to be cast into the outer darkness. The Master intended it as a parable, but they could not understand it. The king was too se-

vere they argued; he must have known that people from off the highways would not be wearing wedding garments.

Jesus was silent, but James observed: "Why, guests must know that it is not seemly to go to a king's wedding in torn and dirty clothes. All are freely invited, but he who comes unwashed and presumptuous will be cast out into the darkness. No one is admitted who is unprepared."

Another of His parables concerning the Kingdom of Heaven disturbed them. It was that of the unjust steward whom his master praised because he had prudently used the money entrusted to him in order to provide for himself. The steward knew that he would be dismissed, and secretly remitted to his master's debtors a part of their debts, so that he might stand well with them. And he did right! "But, can we purchase the Kingdom of Heaven with goods that are not ours?"

A mule-driver interposed: "I understand the story thus: None of us has any property on earth. We are all only the stewards of the property, and when we give of it to the needy, we are unjust stewards because we give what is not ours, and yet we do right."

Some shook their heads over this interpretation; the rich and those learned in the Scriptures could not understand it. But Jesus said in prayer: "I praise, O Father, that Thou revealest many things to the simple that are hidden from the worldly wise. Blessed are those who are not offended by My teaching!"

Now the disciples always discussed together anything that was not quite clear. Thomas did not exactly under-

stand what the Master meant by the word truth, by saying that He was the truth, that we must pray to God in truth, and that he who is of truth, would understand God's word.

What did John, the youngest of them, say? "The children of the world call it truth if they break a stone with a hammer and find that it is chalk; they call it truth to know the difference between the fishes in the sea and the worms on the earth, and to be able to measure the dimensions of the sky with figures; they call it truth when it is established that a seed of corn germinates, and a man's body turns into dust after death. Truly, every one can see those things with his own eyes. But is man's eye the truth? And did He say: 'You shall *know* the truth?' No, He said: 'You shall *be* the truth.'"

To *be* the truth! To be void of guile and falsehood! To be true and open in mind and heart!

So they sought to increase their knowledge of the Kingdom of Heaven; hourly and daily did many a one rejoice because he had found what the wise men of the ages had sought after.

The poor, the despised, and the unhappy came to Him more and more. That strange desert camp was often filled with the sick, the overburdened, and the despairing. Many came from afar full of great troubles, yet borne up by hope, and then when they saw Him, tall and earnest, standing there and teaching men in deep sayings, their courage deserted them, they could not trust Him. They were full of fear. Then He spread out His hands and exclaimed: "Come, come unto Me, all that are overburdened and oppressed; I will relieve you.

I am not come to judge and to punish. I am come to find what is lost, to heal what is sick, and to revive what is dead. I am come to the sad to console them, to the fallen to raise them up. I give Myself for the redemption of many. My power is not of this world. I am Master in the Kingdom of God, where all are blessed in trustful, joyful love. Come to Me, all ye who have erred and gone astray. I have joy and eternal life for you."

The disciples looked at each other in astonishment, He had never before spoken with such divine gentleness. The people, sobbing, crowded round Him, His words were as balm to their wounds. They wondered how it was possible for a man to speak so proudly, lovingly, and divinely. They gave themselves up to Him, filled with trust and enthusiasm; in His presence the hungry were fed, the blind made to see, the lame walked, doubters belived, the weak became strong, and dead souls lived.

Simon always rejoiced greatly whenever new wanderers came by, and, withdrawing from their companions, took a vow to follow the Master's teaching. He was exceedingly angry when they refused, alleging that it was not possible to accomplish what He demanded of them. Jesus related a story in connection with Simon's emotions. "A man had two sons, and told each of them to go and work in his field. One said, 'Yes, father, I will go at once.' But afterwards he reflected that the work was hard, and he did not go. The other son told his father to his face that he would not go into the field; it was too much labour. When he was alone he thought, 'I will do my father's will,' and he went into the field and

worked. Which of the two, in your opinion, did right?"

A man learned in the Law replied: "He who promised to go. For it stands written: 'He who declares himself ready to obey the Law.'"

But Jesus was vexed at that reply, and said in sorrow: "It is extraordinary how falsely you interpret the Law. Sinners who sincerely repent will find their way to the Kingdom of Heaven before such expounders of the Law."

From that time forward Simon rejoiced no more over empty promises, nor did he vex himself over the refusals of those who would perhaps come later to take up the heavy work. Patiently, as once he had waited at the lake for the fish to come to his nets, he now waited until they came. And he understood a mystic saying of his Master: "All are called, many come, few remain."

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

At that time there lived in Jerusalem, the royal city, a man who was perfectly happy. He had everything that makes life pleasant: great wealth, powerful friends, and beautiful women who daily crowned his head with wreaths of roses. He was still young, every one of his wishes was fulfilled, and it seemed as if things would always be the same. And yet sometimes, amid all the joy and gladness there would be a quiet hour in which he thought over and measured his good fortune, and then he felt afraid. Yes, he was greatly troubled, for every day he saw, on all hands, how property vanished, and how the coffins of those who the day before had been enjoying life were carried to the grave.

Then this man, who, although he was happy, was yet beset with fears, heard that there was a prophet out in the wilderness who had eternal life. He knew of everlasting wealth and happiness, and half the world were flocking to him in order to share in it. So Simeon — that was his name — determined to seek out this man. He locked up his precious stones in iron chests, delivered his palaces, vineyards, ships, and servants into the keeping of his steward, gave his women to the protection of the gods, and gathered his slaves round him. He rode out of

the town on a thoroughbred steed, he wore soft, bright-coloured garments adorned with gold and jewels, his scimitar at his side, and waving feathers of rare birds in his hat. A troop of servants accompanied him, and by his side rode Moors on African camels, holding a canopy over him to protect him from the sun, and fanning him into coolness with flowery fans. They brought with them fruits of the east and the south in golden dishes, tasty fishes and game, rare wines and incense, and pillows for sleeping on. During its progress the procession met black figures carrying a dead man. The body lay swathed in white linen on a high board, and a raven circled round it in the air. Simeon turned indignantly away; he had a horror of all that was dead. He scattered coins among the mourners, for he would have liked to throw a gay covering adorned with precious stones over all sorrow and mourning.

When he reached the mountains his horse began to stumble and falter. The steed's hoofs were insecure on the ringing flat stones; he reared his head and snorted, and would not go on. Simeon took counsel how he was to proceed. Natives leading mules came by, and offered them to him, but he refused. He could not go to the Prophet who held the key to imperishable wealth and eternal life on such contemptible beasts. His slaves had to make a litter, and he lay under its glittering canopy on soft cushions, while six Moors bore their master thus into the desert. When they rested at an oasis, it was like a royal camp; servants handed him water from the spring in a crystal goblet, skilful cooks prepared the meal, beautiful women, whose skin was soft as velvet and

brown as copper, spread out their black hair for him and delighted him with harp-playing, while armed men kept watch against the desert chief, Barabbas.

The country became more and more uninviting, and it was almost impossible to avoid many discomforts. Simeon remembered the comfort of his palace in Jerusalem, and contemplated turning back. And yet the thought of the wise man who could help him to immortality proved too attractive. People came over the bare hills who told of the teacher at the other extreme of the desert, how He gathered at times all kinds of people round Him and spoke on the everlasting Kingdom of God. And so the swaying litter went no farther, and the next day reached the valley through dry rocky ravines, and found there a few olive- and fig-trees. People crowded round one of the fig-trees; they were for the most part poor, sad-looking creatures, miserable outcasts wandering homeless and loveless, here and there. Clothed in scanty rags, their forms bent, they turned their faces towards the tree, for there He stood and spoke.

"Be ye not sad nor cast down. You miss nothing of the world's attractions. Yours is the Father and His Kingdom. Trust in Him; you are His. You shall be made glad through love; things will be easier for you if you love than if you hate. And in every misfortune that comes upon you, keep a steadfast soul, and then you have nothing to lose."

Simeon clearly heard the strange words, and thought to himself: "Can this be He? No, a wise man does not surround himself with such a shabby, poverty-stricken crowd. And yet they say it is He." Simeon got out of his

litter and drew his scimitar. Then he pressed forward amid the disagreeable smell of old clothes, and of the perspiring crowd. Oh, how repulsive is the odour of the poor! The multitude shyly gave way to the brilliant figure, for never had its like been seen in the Master's neighbourhood. Jesus stood calmly under the fig-tree and saw the stranger coming. He stood still three paces off him, beat his head, placed his hand on his brow, like a king who greets another.

"Sir," said the stranger, and his voice was not sharp and shrill as when he gave his servants orders, but low and hoarse. "Sir, I have come a long way; I have sought you a long while."

Jesus held out His hand to him in silence.

Simeon was excited. He wanted to explain his object at once so as to return to Jerusalem without delay, but the words would not come. He stammered out, "Sir, I hear that you understand about eternal life. Therefore am I come to you. Tell me where it is to be found. What shall I do in order to possess eternal life?"

Jesus stepped forward a pace, looked earnestly at the man, and said: "If you desire to live, keep the commandments of Moses."

"Of Moses?" returned the stranger, surprised. "But I do. Although I am of pagan descent, in these matters I follow the people among whom I live. But that is not the point. They die. I want to live for ever."

Then said Jesus: "If you desire to live for ever, follow Him who lives for ever. Love God above everything, and your neighbour as yourself."

"Oh, Master," said Simeon, "that is just what I strive to do. And yet I am afraid."

Whereupon Jesus said: "You are afraid because you ought to do it, and desire to do it, and yet do it not. You possess palaces in the town, fertile acres in the country, ships on the sea, laden with precious things from all quarters of the world. You possess a thousand slaves. Your stewards would fill many volumes if they wrote down all that you possess."

"Sir, how do you know everything?"

"My friend, your brilliant train spells wealth; but look at the people who follow Me. They have poor garments but glad souls, they have the Kingdom of God within them. If you are in earnest, you must give up all you possess."

"Give up all I possess?"

"You must give it up and become like these. Then come to Me, and I will lead you to everlasting life."

When Jesus had said that and more, the stranger cast down his head, and slowly stepped back. What? I must become like these lowly, beggarly people? must deliberately step out of my accustomed circle into this boundless misery? No, no man could do it. He returned to his suite in very low spirits.

Jesus looked after him thoughtfully with a kindly glance.

"Who is he?" the disciples asked. "He wears royal garments. We have never seen such silks. Is he a priest from the East? If he came in order to make us gifts, he has forgotten his intention."

Paying no heed to the jesting words, the Master said

thoughtfully: "It is difficult to gain a rich man for blessedness. Men's wills are too weak. Their bodies are lapped in luxury, yet scorn of the soul leaves them a prey to fear. Yes, My friends, it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter our heaven."

The word was spoken more in sorrow than in anger. And then some one ventured to say: "Yes, if the commandments are too hard, there must be sin. Men are bound to transgress them."

Jesus looked at the trembler: "Why then am I come? Why then do I show you how light the burden is? Do you not see for yourselves how free a man is when he has thrown off great cares and desires? Nay, you will never see that till the grace of God is given you."

They scarcely heard what He said. The brilliant procession had attracted their attention, and as it moved off with its horses, camels, riders, Moors, and lovely women, they looked after it with longing eyes. A little old hunchbacked Israelite, who was cowering behind a block of stone, murmured with some malice: "Seems to me they 'd rather go with the heathen than wait here for the grace of the heavenly Father."

Simeon once more lay in the swaying litter and thought. He tried to reconcile his unaccomplished purpose with his conscience. This Prophet — he was a visionary. What could the Kingdom of God within us mean? Visionary! intended only to make people lazy and incapable. A doctrine for vagabonds and beggars! And so that was living for ever! So long as *he* lived he should believe himself to be right, and when he was

dead, he could not know that he had been wrong. And then the social danger. The possessor not the owner of his own property? He must give it up, share it with the poor? Such equality of property or lack of property would prevent all progress, and plunge everything into mediocrity. No, that is not my salvation! Ah well, this journey into the desert will be an advantage to me in one way; it will make me feel happier than ever in my comfortable house.

He took the opportunity of a last look at the place on which he now turned his back. Several, attracted by the brilliant cavalcade, had followed from afar. Three of the disciples had even come after him in order to set right a misunderstanding. They came up with the stranger at a spring which gushed forth from a rock, and grass grew round it. The Moors wished to prevent them coming nearer, but Simeon recognized that they were not dangerous, and let them approach him.

James, one of the disciples, said: "Great Lord, it is a pity. You are one of the few who have left our Master without accomplishing their purpose. It would not be quite so hard as you think. He Himself says that if a man only has a good will he is never lost. The will to live for ever is the thing."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Simeon. "His demands are quite impossible."

"Must everything be taken so literally?" said James. "The Master always put the ideal high, and expresses it in lofty words, so that it may the better stay in the memory."

Simeon waved them aside with his gold-encircled

hand. "To give up all I possess! To become horribly poor — ?"

Then another disciple stepped forward, stood before him in a sad-coloured garment, crying: "Look at us. Have we given up everything? We never had much more than we have now, and what we had we have still. Our brother Thomas has only one coat because he is full-blooded; I have two coats because I easily feel cold. If I had poor legs the Master would allow me an ass like Thaddeus. Every one has what he needs. You need more than we do because you are accustomed to more. But you cannot use all that you have for yourself. And yet you need it for the many hundreds of men you employ, who work for the good of the country, and live by you. I say that your property belongs to you by right just as my second coat to me, and that you can quite well be His disciple."

"You chatter too much, Philip," said James reprovingly. "If a man makes a pilgrimage of repentance towards eternal life, he does n't travel like the Emperor of the Indies, or if he does, he does n't know what he wants. Believe me, noble sir, wealth is always dangerous, even for life. The best protection against envy, hate, and sudden attacks is poverty."

There was a third disciple, Matthew, with them, and he addressed himself not to the stranger, but to his comrades, and said: "Brothers, it must be clearly understood that he who desires the Kingdom of Heaven must give up everything that causes him unrest; otherwise he cannot be entirely with the Father. But you," turning to the great man from Jerusalem, "you do not wish to

break with the world? Well, then, do one thing, love your neighbour. Keep your silken raiment, but clothe the naked. Keep your riding-horse, but give crutches to the lame. Keep your high position, but free your slaves. Only if you think what is brought you from the fields, the mines, the workshops is yours, then woe be to you!"

"I would willingly do one thing," said Simeon.

"Good! then say to your slaves, 'You are free. If you will continue to serve me, I will treat you well. If you prefer to go your own way, take what you require of good clothing and mules.' Will you do that, stranger?"

"You fanatic!" shouted Simeon angrily. "What notions you have about men. They 're not like that. Life 's very different from that!"

"But life will be like that some day," said Matthew.

"He is a Messiah who destroys the Kingdom instead of building it," exclaimed Simeon, jumping into his litter and giving the sign to depart.

The procession moved on slowly, its glitter showing up against the dark rocks of the desert track. The disciples gazed after it in silence.

A little old man lay on the yellow sand. He was so grey and dwarfish that he looked like a mountain sprite. The old fellow was at home in the bare, big rocks. He loved the desert, for it is the home of great thoughts. He loved the desert where he hoped to find the entrance to Nirvana. Now when the disciples passed near him as they were returning to the Master, he pushed the upper part of his body out of the sand, and asked: "What did the man want to whom you were speaking?"

"He wanted to be able to live for ever."

"To live for ever!" exclaimed the old fellow in surprise. "And that is why the man drags himself across the desert. What extraordinary people there are! Now I could go any distance to find my Nirvana. I only desire eternal life for my enemies. It is many a day since people said I was a hundred years old. If you are men of wisdom, teach me, tell me what I must do to reach Nirvana?"

They were astonished. It was like something out of a fairy tale. A living creature who did not wish to live! But Matthew knew how to answer him.

"My friend, your desire is modest, but it can never be fulfilled. You will never be nothing. If you die, you lose only your body, not yourself. You will, perhaps, not live, but you will be just as the same as now: you are not living now, and yet you exist. Breathing and waiting is not living. Living is fulfilment, is love — is the Kingdom of Heaven."

"My Kingdom of Heaven is Nirvana," said the little old man, and buried himself again in the sand.

As they went along Matthew said: "He fears everlasting existence because he does not recognize a God. But he is not so far from us as the man who loves the world."

Simeon went on his way, and towards evening reached the oasis of Kaba. He ordered his people to encamp there for the night. The servants, porters, and animals formed the outer ring, the tent in which he took his supper, stretched himself on his cushions, and let himself be fanned to sleep by the maidens, was in the centre. But he did not sleep well. He had bad dreams: his house in Jeusalem was burnt down, his ships, were wrecked, faith-

less stewards broke open his chests. And amid all, always the cry, "Give it all up!" About midnight he awoke. And it was no longer a dream, but terrible reality. A muffled noise could be heard throughout the camp, dark forms with glittering weapons moved softly about, in the camp itself crawling figures moved softly here and there. A tall, dark man, accompanied by Bedouins, carrying torches and knives, stood in front of Simeon.

"Do not be alarmed, my princely friend!" he said to Simeon, who jumped up; but none could tell whether he spoke from arrogance or authority, kindly or in scorn. "It 's true we are disturbing your night's repose, but, provided you give no trouble, we have no evil designs. Hand over all that you possess."

In the first confusion the wretched man thought he heard the Prophet speaking, but he soon noted the difference. The Prophet and His disciples gave up everything that they possessed. This man took everything that others possessed.

"I know you, proud citizen of Jerusalem. I am Barabbas, called the king of the desert. It is useless to resist. Three hundred men are at this moment keeping watch round your camp. We 've settled matters with your servants and slaves; they are powerless."

It was clear to the poor rich man what the chief meant. His slaves were slain, he was menaced by a like fate. What had that disciple of the Prophet said? Wealth endangered life, and poverty protected it. If he had set his followers free, giving them what they needed, and wandered about in simple fashion on his own legs,

the robber's knife would not now be pointed at his breast. In unrestrained rage he uttered a brutal curse: "Take whatever you can find, and do not mock me, you infamous beast of the desert!"

"Calmly, calmly, my dear sir," said the chief, while dusky men rolled up carpets, clothes, arms, jewels, and golden goblets, and threw them into big sacks. "See, we are helping you to pack up."

"Take the rubbish away," shouted Simeon, "and leave me in peace."

The chief, Barabbas, grinned. "I fancy, my friend, that you and I know each other too well for me to let you go back to Jerusalem. You would then have too great a desire to have me with you. You would send out the Romans to search for me, and bring me to the beautiful city. The desert is much more to my taste: life is pleasanter there. Now, tell me where the bags of coin such as a man like you always carries about with him are hidden. No? Then you may go to sleep."

He who went forth to seek eternal life is now in danger of losing mortal life. In terror of death, cold sweat on his brow, he began to haggle for his life with the desert king. He not only offered all that he had with him. The next caravans were bringing him rare spices and incense; bars of gold, diamonds, and pearls were coming in the Indian ships, and he would send all out to the desert, as well as beautiful women slaves, with jewels to deck their throats. Only he must be allowed to keep his bare life.

Grinning and wrinkling up his snub nose, Barabbas let it be understood that he was not to be won with

women and promises — he was no longer young enough. Neither would he have any executioner despatched in search of him — he was not old enough. And he had his weaknesses. He could not decide which would suit the noble citizen's slender, white neck best, metal or silk. He took a silken string from the pocket of his cloak, while two Bedouins roughly held Simeon.

Meanwhile, outside in the camp, the second chief was packing the stolen treasure on the camels by torchlight. Whenever he stumbled over a dead body he muttered a curse, and when his work was finished he sought his comrade. Women in chains wept loudly, not so much on account of their imprisonment — they took that almost as a matter of course — but because their master was being murdered in the tent. So the second chief snatched a torch from a servant, hastened to the tent, and arrived just in the nick of time.

"Barabbas!" he exclaimed, taking hold of the murderer, "don't you remember what we determined? We only kill those who fight; we do not kill defenceless persons."

Barabbas removed his thin arms from his victim, and in a tearful voice grumbled: "Dismas, you are dreadful. I 'm old now, and am I to have no more pleasure?"

Dismas said meaningly: "If the old man does not keep to his agreement, the troop will have its pleasure, and, for a change, swing him who likes to be called king of the desert."

That had the desired effect. Barabbas knew the band cared much more for Dismas than for himself, and he did not wish matters to come to a climax.

When day dawned a mule was led to Simeon. One of his slaves, with his wounded arm in a sling, was allowed him, and he carried some bread and his cloak, and led the beast. And so the citizens of Jerusalem returned to the town he had left a week before under such brilliant circumstances, a defeated and plundered man.

The affair attracted great attention in the city. Armed incursions were eagerly made into the desert between Jerusalem and the Jordan, where one evil deed after another was reported. Even the Rabbis and Pharisees preached a campaign to clear the rocks and sandy flats of the dangerous and destructive hordes by which they were infested. The famous band of the chiefs, Barabbas and Dismas — so it was said — were not the worst. Much more ominous were the vagrant crowds that gathered about the so-called Messiah from Nazareth, who, feeling himself safe in the desert, indulged in disorderly speeches and acts. So it was settled to send out a large company of soldiers, led by the violent Pharisee, Saul, a weaver who had left his calling out of zeal for the law, in order to free the land from the mob of robbers and heretics.

At that time, Dismas, the old robber-chief, fell into deep contrition. He had never really been in harmony with his criminal calling. Murder was particularly hateful to him, and, so far as he was free to do so, he had always sought to avoid it. Now plundering and robbing became hateful to him. In the night he saw the terrible Jehovah. He thought of John, the desert preacher, and considered it time to repent. So one day he said to Barabbas: "Do you know, comrade, there is just now a

prince at the oasis of Silam who has with him much greater wealth than that citizen of Jerusalem? I know his circumstances, and his people, and how to get at him. Shall we take this lord?"

"If you continue to be so useless, Dismas, you 'll be given to the vultures." Those were the words with which Barabbas thanked him, and they decided to make the attack. Dismas led the band towards the oasis of Silam. Barabbas went with his steed decorated with gay-coloured feathers, an iron coronet on his head. For it is a prince whom he is to visit! Dismas encamped his men under a rocky precipice. And when at night-time all rested in order to be strong for the attack on the princely train early in the morning, Dismas climbed the rocks and gave the signal. The Roman soldiery hidden behind the rocks cut down all who opposed them, and took the rest prisoners, Dismas and Barabbas among them. When the latter saw that he had been betrayed, he began to rage in his chains like a wild animal.

"What would you have, brother?" said Dismas to Barrabas, who had often scorned him so bitterly. "Am I not a prisoner too? Have n't you always preached that right lay with the stronger? So then the Romans are right this time. Once you betrayed me and forced me to join the plundering Bedouins. Oh, excellent Barabbas! And now I have betrayed you to the strong Romans. And they will most probably impale us!" And as if that were a real delight, he brought his hand down cheerfully on his companion's shoulder so that his chains rattled. "Yes, my dearest brother, they will impale us!"

They were brought in gangs to Jerusalem, where they

lay in prison for many long months awaiting death. On account of his self-surrender, Dismas had been granted his wish for solitary confinement. He desired, undisturbed, to take stock of his wasted life. A never-ending line of dark, bloody figures passed before him. But there was one patch of light amid the gloom. It had happened many years ago, but he had a very clear remembrance of that distant hour. A young mother with her child rode on an ass. The infant spread out his little arms and looked at him. But never in his life had human creature looked at him like that child did, filled with ardent love. If only he could once again before he died see such a beam of light!

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

When the people who had gathered round Jesus heard that Saul, the terrible weaver, was scouring the desert with a troop of police, they began to melt away. They feared unpleasant occurrences. They fully recognized the right, but most of them were disinclined to suffer persecution for the right, They must return to their domestic duties, to their families, industries, and commerce, and, so far as was possible, live according to the Master's teaching. They left Him because it seemed to them that His cause was falling. In the end there were just a few faithful ones who stayed with Him. Some, truly, in the hope that He would reveal the power of the Messiah. But even they urged Him to repair to some other neighbourhood. Jesus was not afraid of having to render an account of Himself to His adversaries in Jerusalem, but the time had not yet come, the edifice was not yet finished. He knew that He could never return, for the more incontestable His justification was, the more dangerous it would seem to them. With His now dwindled troop of followers He left the desert and went to His native Galilee.

But here His opponents were, as they had formerly been; houses were closed as He approached, the people

got out of His way when He began to speak. Only Mary, with a mother's the simple faith, said: "Ah, at last you have come, my son! Now stay with me!"

There was, however, no place for Him in the house. A strange apprentice from Jericho was established in the workshop. He worked at the wood with the chopper and saw that Jesus had once handled, sat by the hearth and at the table where Jesus had once sat; slept in the bed on which Jesus had once reposed; but it did not seem that he enjoyed the same pleasant dreams for he groaned and tossed about — on awaking was not pleased that he must continue the same work which he had ill-humouredly laid aside the evening before. How often did Mary look at him in silence, and think of the difference between him and her Jesus. And she saw how the man carelessly ate his meals, and went to his bed each day, while her son was perhaps perishing in a strange land, and had no stone whereon to lay His head.

And now Jesus was once again with her. "Mother," he said to Mary, "don't speak impatiently to Aaron. He is poor, discontented, and sullen; he has found little kindness in men, and without exactly knowing it, thirsts for kindness. When you would bring Me water in the morning to wash with, take it to him. When you would prepare dinner for Me, prepare it for him. When you would bless Me in the evening, bless him. Love may perhaps do what words cannot. Everything that you think to do for Me who is far away, do for him."

"And you — you will have nothing more from me?"

"Mother, I want everything from you, and am always

with you. You can be good to Me in showing kindness to every poor creature. I must lead men by harshness, be you gentle. I must burn the ulcers from out the dead flesh, you shall heal the wounds. I must be the salt, be you the oil."

How happy she was when He spoke to her like that. For that was her life — to be kind, to help, wherever she could. Her son consecrated such well-doing like a covenant, a remembrance for mother and child when parted from each other. Since He appealed to her love, she did not feel so lonely, felt once more at one with Him, and had a sort of presentiment that in future times her bleeding mother's heart would receive incomparable satisfaction.

Once again Jesus went through His native land to see if the seed of His teaching had sprung up anywhere. But the earth was bare. He was not so much troubled by the passionate enmity with which many regarded Him, or the angry murmurings against Him and His word, as by the indifference, the obstinate, stupid adherence to commonplace inanities, the entire lack of perception, the indifference towards spiritual life. At first the novelty and strangeness of His appearance had compelled attention, but that was over. Whether the Prophet was old or new, it was all one to them. One was just like the other, they declared, and said neither yes nor no. "The hot and the cold," Jesus exclaimed one day, "I can accept, but those who are lukewarm I cast from Me. Had I preached in heathen lands, or in the ruined seaports of Tyre and Sidon, they would have done penance in sacks and ashes. Had I taught in Sodom and Gomorrah,

those towns would still be standing. But these places here in Galilee are sunk in mud and shame, they scorn their Prophet. When the day of reckoning comes, it will go worse with this land than with those towns. My poor Bethsaida, and thou, lovely Magdala! And Capernaum, thou beautiful place! How I loved you, My people, how deeply I honoured you; I desired to lift you to heaven. And now you sink in the abyss. Pray to him, your mammon, in the days of your need; there will be no other consolation for you. Carouse, laugh, and be cruel to-day; to-morrow you will be hungry and murmur: ye have delayed everything. Believe me a day will come when you will seek to set yourselves right with Me: 'Lord, we would willingly have given you food, drink, and lodging, but you did not come to us.' But I did come to you. I came in the starving, the thirsty, the homeless, only you would not recognize Me. I will not accuse you to the heavenly Father, but Moses, whose commandments you have broken, will accuse you. And when you appeal to the Father, He will say: 'I know ye not.'"

The disciples trembled in heart and brain when He spoke those angry words. But they were not surprised, for the people were sunk so low.

He woke His comrades in one of the next nights and said: "Get up and let the others sleep; they will not go with us, our way is too hard. Enemies will be on us. Whoever of you fears, let him lie down again." Many did lie down again, and those who went with the Master numbered twelve.

They wandered over the heights of Cana, over the moutains of Gischala till towards midnight, and then

again till sundown. The disciples knew not whither they were going; it was enough that they were with Him. But on the way they found many of the same mind, and also some who invited the Master to their houses for a jest, in order to be able to say: I am acquainted with Him. Men of good position were among those who listened to His words with the greatest attention, and then haggled with Him to see if the Kingdom of Heaven could not be had at a cheaper price than the world. He always answered: "What use is the world to you if you have a soul! Therein alone is the secret of salvation; a man must find his soul and preserve it, and raise it to the Father." Or he put it differently: "God is to be found in the spirit!"

And when the stranger audience asked what in the spirit meant, the apostles explained: "He means spiritual life. He does not desire the life of man to pass only in corporeal existence; He says his *ego* lies in spiritual existence, and the more a man works spiritually and lives in ideas which are not of the earth, the nearer he comes to God who is wholly spirit."

"Then men learned in the law are nearer to God than the workers in the field." To which John: "A man learned in the law who depends only on the letter is far from spirit. The labourer who does not draw a profit from the land but thinks and imagines how to improve it, is near the spirit."

On the road between Cædasa and Tyre is a farm. When its owner heard that the Prophet was in the neighbourhood, he sent out people to find Him and invite Him to go to the farm where He would be safe from

the snares of the Pharisees. But the owner was himself a Pharisee and he intended to examine the man, perhaps to tempt Him to betray Himself and then deliver Him over to the government. Jesus told the messenger that He would gladly accept the hospitality if He might bring his companions with Him. That was not in the Pharisee's plan, first, because of the quantity of food and drink so many persons would need; and second, because under such protection it would be difficult to lay hands on the demagogue. But in order to get the one, there was nothing for it but to include the others. They were respectfully received and entertained. The host testified to his joy at entertaining under his roof the "Saviour of Judæa," and was delighted with the Master's principles. He gave a great banquet in His honour with the choicest viands and costliest drinks to which the disciples, who were somewhat hungry and thirsty, heartily did justice, and the Master, who never spoiled a glad hour, cheerfully did the same. When tongues were loosened, the host wanted straightway to begin with artful allusions and questions, but his guest was a match for him.

Jesus had observed that, while they were feeding so luxuriously in the hall, needy folk were harshly turned away in the courtyard, and slunk off hungry and in bitterness. So He suddenly said that good stories suited good wine, and He would tell one. "That is delightful!" exclaimed the host. And Jesus related:

"There was once a rich man who wore the most costly garments, and enjoyed the most luxurious food and drink, and lived in great joy. One day there came to his

door a sick, half-starved man, who begged for a few of the crumbs that fell from the table. The proud man was wrathful that the miserable wretch should dare to disturb his pleasure, and let loose his hounds. But instead of chasing the man, the dogs licked his ulcers, and he crawled ashamed into a hole. On the very day on which the wretched creature died, death came also to the rich man, threw his well-fed body into the grave and his soul into hell. And there his wretched soul endured most horrible torture, gnawing hunger and parching thirst, and the pain was increased when the dead man looked into Paradise and saw there the man he had sent away despised from his door sitting by Abraham. He saw that juicy fruits grew, and clear springs gushed forth there. Then he called up, 'Father Abraham, I implore you, tell the man sitting by you to dip his finger-tips into the water and cool my tongue, for I suffer unbearable torture.' To which Abraham answered, 'No, my son, that cannot be. You received all that was good on earth and forgot the poor, now he forgets you. There is no longer any connection between him and you.' Then the man in hell whimpered, 'Woe! woe! woe! Let my five brothers who still dwell on earth know that they must be merciful to the poor, so that they may not be in my case.' And Abraham said: 'They have the prophets on earth who tell them that every day.' Then the man whined: 'Oh Father Abraham, they do not listen to the prophets. If only you would make one of the dead live again, that he might tell them how the unmerciful are punished, then they would believe.' And Abraham: 'If they do not believe the living, how should they believe the dead?'"

During the Master's recital, the host several times stretched forth his hand to his glass, but each time drew it back again. He had not a word to say, and the desire to lay snares for the Prophet had gone. He stole unnoticed from the hall, went down to his steward, and ordered him henceforth never to send a needy man from the door unrefreshed.

One of his friends who was at the banquet was immensely pleased that this betrayer of the people should have so exposed himself. "You understood? The story was nothing but an attack on the possessors of property."

"Let that be," said the host, and turned away. Then he went and furnished the Prophet and His little band with provisions, gave Him directions for His journey, and pointed out how He could best avoid pursuers. He looked after them for a long time. They have prophets on earth and do not heed them. He would himself like to accompany this one. His little soul was caught by Him he had wished to catch.

Things did not go so well with our fugitive in other places. An evil slander about the Baptist was spread abroad — that he was a glutton and a wine-bibber! Jesus heard of it, and said: "John the Baptist fasted. They said of him that he was possessed by a demon. It is neither eating nor fasting that they object to in the prophets, it is the truth which they speak."

Then they came to villages and farms where they wished to rest, but none would give them shelter. This angered the Master. The dust on the ground was not worthy to remain sticking to the feet of those who came

to bring the Kingdom of God. The heartless would be thrust aside! But anger was turned into pitiful love. When a contrite man approached Him He raised him up with both arms, encouraged him, taught him to be kind, showed him the joy of life, and how to penetrate the sacred recesses of his own being — self-examination.

Self-examination! That is the everlasting guide Jesus gave to all who sought God.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

At last Jesus and His followers reached the sea. When it lay before them in its immensity, and the white-winged ships flew over the blue ground; when they saw in the far distance the line drawn between sky and water, and the firmament rising behind so darkly mysterious, their courage was renewed, and Simon proposed that they should sail across to the cheerful Greeks and the strong Romans.

"Why not to the savage Gauls and the terrible Germans?" exclaimed Bartholomew, with some ill-temper at such an adventurous spirit.

"Ever since my youth I longed to see Rome," said Simon.

And Jesus: "Seek your strength in your native land. Here in the land of the prophets grows the tree among the branches of which will dwell the birds of heaven. Then the winds will come and carry the seeds out into the whole world."

The disciples who had not hitherto travelled much, found a new world in the harbours of Tyre and Sidon. People and goods from every quarter of the earth, strange people and strange customs. They had never before seen men work with such industry in the ware-

houses, on the wharves, on the ships; yet others gave themselves up to continual idleness, trotting half-naked along the beach, begging with loud pertinacity in the harbour, or lying shamelessly basking in the sun. Look! the lepers limp about, and complacently exhibit their sores. One of the disciples looked questioningly at the Master whether He would not heal them? Perhaps, then, they would believe in Him.

"You know," He said reprovingly, "if they must be healed in order to believe, I say they must believe in order to be healed."

There were also to be seen in those towns nobles and kings from all lands surrounded by beguiling brilliance and gay trains; as others here haggled for spices, silks, and furs, so they haggled for dignity and honour. And there were wise and learned men from among all peoples: they made speeches, and talked in the public places in praise of their native prophets and gods. The Hindoo praised his Brahma, the Magian shouted about sacred fire, the Semite spoke zealously for his Jehovah, the Egyptian sang the praises of his Osiris, the Greek extolled his Zeus, the Roman called on his Jupiter, and the German spoke in hoarse tones of his Wotan. Magicians and astrologers were among them, and they boasted of their art and knowledge. Naked saints stood on blocks of stone, flies and wasps, buzzing round them, and still as statues they endured torments for the glory of their gods. The disciples of Jesus saw and heard all this in astonishment, and were terrified to find there were so many gods, When they were alone together with the Master in a cedar-grove near Sidon, one of them

who had been deeply wrapt in thought said: "An idea has just occurred to me. Whether it be Brahma the reposeful, or Osiris the shining, or Jehovah the wrathful, or Zeus the loving, or Jupiter the striving, or Wotan the conqueror, or our God the Father — it occurs to me that it all comes to the same in the end."

They were alarmed at this bold speech, and looked at the Master expecting an angry reproof. Jesus was silent for a while, then said calmly: "Do good to those who hate you."

They scarcely understood how what He had said explained the incredible difference between His teaching and that of the others.

They were still speaking when a young man with a beardless face and bold expression came riding by on a tall steed. When he saw the group of Nazarenes he reined in his horse; it would scarcely stop, stamped with its legs on the ground, and threw its head snorting into the air.

"Is n't it the man with the Kingdom of Heaven?" asked the rider contemptuously.

James came quickly forward. "Sir, leave your mocking. How do you know that you will never need it?"

"I?" said the arrogant cavalier. "I and a Kingdom of Heaven that is not to be seen, heard, or understood!"

"But felt, sir!"

"That is He," exclaimed the horseman, pointing to Jesus. "No, Nazarenes, I do not believe in your Heavenly Kingdom."

To which Jesus replied: "Perhaps you will believe in My empty tomb."

"We will see," said the cavalier, putting spurs to his horse so that it reared, and galloped off. The disciples soon saw merely a cloud of dust. Matthew looked searchingly at his comrades. "Did you recognize him? Was n't it Saul, the dread weaver? They were talking in the town yesterday that he was coming with a legion of soldiers to take the Nazarenes."

Then they urged in terror: "Master, let us flee."

He was not accustomed to flee before zealous Pharisees, but there was another reason for removing his innocent disciples from the atmosphere of these big cities. Simon was always suggesting that it would be no bad thing to spend the coming Passover on the Tiber, for he felt less afraid of the heathens in Rome than of the Jews in Jerusalem. He did not suspect the future.

"Not in Rome," said Jesus, "but rather in Jerusalem will we eat the Paschal lamb."

Soon after they wandered forth and left the noisy seaport behind them. As the roads became even more unsafe, they climbed the rocks and took the way across the mountains.

The gods came down from high Olympus, the Law came down from Sinai, Light came down from Lebanon. For here happened the great revelation that my timid soul is now to witness.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

WHAT now comes happened during the journey in the mountains of Lebanon. One day they were resting under an old weather-beaten cedar. The rain trickled through the bristling bush of needles from one branch to another on to the hats under the broad brims of which the men cowered, their legs drawn up under them, their arms crossed over their chests. Tired and somewhat out of humour, they looked out into the damp mist against which the near summits and masses of rock stood out. The hair and beards of the older men had turned grey, and even the faces of the younger seemed to have aged. For the hardships had been great. But the glow in their eyes was not quenched. They had laid aside their long staffs; the sacks which some carried on their backs were wrinkled up and empty. A little way off was a tree trunk, so big that three men could hardly have encompassed it, which had a white, rugged bark, so that it seemed as if spirits had carved mysterious signs in pure silver. Jesus, a little apart from His disciples, was resting under this tree. He was, as always, without a hat, and His abundant nut-brown hair fell over His shoulders. His indescribably beautiful face was paler than formerly. He leaned against the trunk of the tree and closed His eyes.

The disciples thought He slept, and in order not to wake Him they looked at one another and spoke silently. Their hearts were full of the impressions of their late experiences. They thought of the persecution in their native land, the attractiveness of the big world, and their ignorance of the future. Many of them during this gloomy rest-time thought of their former lives. Who is managing my boat? Who tends my fruit trees? Who works in my workshop? Who sits in the profitable toll-house? Who is providing for my wife, my children? There had been a triumphant progress through the land and then a flight. Men had not recognized the Master. If He would only say loudly and clearly who He was! Meanwhile the outlook was desperate. As if they had run after a demagogue, a traitor, an anti-Jew! How could an anti-Jew be King of the Jews? If He would only say who He was?

Snow lay on the mountains. The ice-wastes stretched down from the heights of Hermon. If our travellers looked up to their summits they saw the wild ruggedness of their covering; if they looked downwards they saw abysses in which the water thundered. An eagle flew through the solitude and vultures screamed in the storm-beaten cedars. The men from the fertile plains of the Galilean Lake had never seen such wild nature. Simon was so enchanted that he wanted to build huts there for himself, his comrades, and the Prophet. The other disciples shuddered, and would gladly have persuaded the Master to return. He pointed to the high mountains, and said: "What frightens you, My friends? When the races of men

are becoming satiated and stupid, such wildness will refresh them."

Simon and John nodded in agreement, but the others, like so many, did not understand what He — who spoke for all time — had said.

They wrapped themselves more closely in their cloaks, climbed up where there was no path, and yet went on their way. The Master walked in front and they followed Him through briars, and over stones; it never came into their heads that He could miss the way. At length, amid the bare rocks standing high above the cedar tops, they had to rest again. Some among them, especially the young John, were almost exhausted. Matthew dipped into his sack and drew forth a small crust of bread, showed it to his companions, and said softly, so that the Master, who was sitting on a stone higher up, might not hear: "That is all; if we do not soon come upon some human dwelling we must perish."

Then Simon said: "I rely on Him who has so often fed His people in the desert."

"Words won't cure our hunger to-day," remarked Andrew, and was frightened at his own temerity. Then Bartholomew put his hand on Matthew's arm and said: "Brother, give that bread to the Master."

"Do you think I 'm a knave, that I should eat it myself?" blazed up Matthew. He got up, went to the Master, and gave Him the bread.

"Have you already eaten?" He asked.

"Master, we are all satisfied."

Jesus looked at him searchingly, and took the bread.

Just at that moment a cry of delight broke from the

men. The mist had suddenly lifted; they could see out into the sunny world. And far beneath them lay the blue, still plains, stretching away until they cut the sky. Far off in the sky were clouds shining like the golden pinnacles of temples. Along the shore lay a chain of villages, and then the sea, studded with sails. The view was so extensive and so bright that they could not but rejoice.

"From over there beyond the water came the heathens," said Matthew.

"And over there will the Christians go," added Simon.

"Who are the Christians?" asked Bartholomew.

"The adherents of the Anointed."

"They will go forth and destroy the Romans," said James.

"Ssh!" they whispered, and laid their fingers on their lips. "He does not like such talk."

He did not seem to have heard them. He had risen and looked out in silence. Then He turned to one and another to read in their faces how it stood with their courage, whether they had lost it or whether it was strengthened by the sight of the splendours of God by which they saw themselves surrounded. Simon had become full of thought. He pondered on the Master's words and on the miracle they had wrought in him. Of all the wisdom that he had ever heard, none was so lofty and clear as this divine teaching. It created a heaven which had not existed formerly. And yet! why was one still so weak? He had turned sidewards and thoughtfully nodded his head.

"What trouble one's own people cause one!" he mur-

mured. James laughed and said: "With your own people? Who are they? I see only one of your own people, and that is you yourself."

"It is just he who troubles me," said Simon. "For, know, the rascal is timid. I can't forget him. The suddenness overwhelms him. For weeks down in Capernaum when the soldiers came near, and in Sidon when the weaver suddenly appeared. Oh, my friend and brother! If it is a question of always sharing want and disgrace with Him, I am ready, I have courage for that. But to stand in absolute danger, there it is that my heart fails me. And such a one would be worthy to go with the Master."

"We are fishermen, but no heroes," assented James. "I do not know which needs more courage, a wretched life or a swift death."

"I must confess one thing to you, brothers," interposed Andrew. "I am not clever — but I 'm not satisfied. Can any one tell me what will become of us?"

Simon's attention was diverted. Brother Philip came up and plucked him by the sleeve. He gave him a piece of bread. Simon took it in order to give it to Matthew.

"What is this?" he asked.

"Philip gave it me, but I 'm not wanting it."

"But," said Matthew, "it is the piece of bread I just gave the Master."

The piece of bread went round the circle, from Matthew to the Master, from Him to John, then on from one to the other until it returned to Matthew. When they were unable to overcome their surprise that no one needed the bread, the Master smiled and said: "Now, you

like to see miracles. Here is one. Twelve men fed with one piece of bread."

"The bread did not do that, Lord. The word did that."

"No, friends, love did it."

Single drops fell from the trees, others hung like long needles and sparkled. Just as the sea lay spread out below, so the summits of the mountains were now revealed, the snow-peaks, and the rock-pinnacles, and the ice-fields were visible until near midnight. The deep stillness and the softness in the air made the men dreamy. Some were inclined to sleep. Others thought of what the future might have in store for them, and let themselves be gently filled with the will of God.

All at once Jesus raised His head a little, and said softly so that those nearest Him heard it: "You hear people talk about Me although they are silent in My presence. What do they say?"

The disciples were alarmed at the sudden question, and said: "People say all kinds of things."

"What do they say about Me? Who do they say I am?"

Then one said: "They all take you for some one different. They prefer to believe in the most unlikely things."

But as He continued to look questioningly at them, they became communicative and told: "One says that you are the prophet Jeremiah; another that you are Elijah of whom they know that he was taken up to heaven in a fiery chariot. Or they say you are John the Baptist whom Herod caused to be murdered."

Then Jesus lifted His head still higher and said: "People say that, do they? But you, now? Who do you think I am?"

That came like a thunderbolt. They were all silent. He saw then that they had followed Him, and knew why. Could He see into their thoughts? Did He begin to doubt if they were true to Him? Or is He not true to Himself? It is all so mysteriously terrifying. And as they were silent He continued to speak:

"You attached yourselves to Me when you were innocent, like men who spread their cloaks at My feet and paid Me the honours of the Messiah. When I announced the Kingdom of God you were with Me. And when some left Me because My way became dangerous, and My person contemned, you stayed with Me, and when My words were fulfilled otherwise than you understood them, not to the power of the world but to its humiliation, yet you stayed with Me, followed Me into exile among the heathens, and into the mountain desert. Who am I then that you remain faithful to Me?"

They were so moved that no one was able to utter a word. Jesus continued:

"I shall go down again to Galilee, but I shall find there no stone on which to rest My head in peace. All who are with Me will be persecuted for My sake. I shall go along the Jordan to Judæa, and up to Jerusalem, where My most powerful enemies are. I shall go into their presence and pronounce judgment on them. My words will pierce them, but My flesh will be in their power. I shall suffer shame and disgrace and a contemptible death. That will happen in a short time. Will

you still stay with Me? Whence is your trust derived? Who do you think I am?"

Simon jumped up from the ground, and exclaimed loudly and clearly: "*You are Jesus the Christ! You are the Son of the living God!*"

. . . . .

Solemnly it sounded forth to all eternity: Jesus Christ, the Son of God!

He stood up straight. Was there not a light round His head? Did not the sky grow light? The men's eyes were dazzled so that they were obliged to shade them with their hands in order not to be blinded. A sound came out of the light, a voice was heard: "He is My Son! He is My beloved Son!" They are beside themselves, their bodies are lifeless, for their souls are in the heights. Then Jesus came out of the light down to them. His countenance was not as it usually was; something extraordinary had passed in Him. With outstretched arms He came slowly towards the disciples: "Simon! Was what you said of your own thinking? It was surely inspired by a Higher Being. Such a faith is the foundation of the Kingdom of God, and so, henceforth, you shall be named Peter, the rock. I will found My community upon you, and what you do on earth shall also count in heaven."

Simon looked round him. What? he thought in the secret recesses of his heart, am I raised above the others? Are none of the brothers equal to me? That is because I am humble. Jesus turned to them all, and said: "Prepare and strengthen yourselves; evil times are approaching. They will kill Me."

As he said that, Simon Peter grasped His arm with both his hands, and exclaimed passionately: "By God's counsel, Master, that shall not happen."

Upon which Jesus said quickly and severely: "Get behind Me, Satan!"

They looked round them. What a sudden change! For whom were the hard words meant? Simon knew, and he went down and hid himself behind the young cedars. There he wept and trembled for woe.

"John, He hates me!" muttered the disciple, and hid his face in his young companion's gown, for he had come to comfort him. "John! Because I was too proud. He sees our thoughts. He hates me!"

"No, Simon, He does not hate you, He loves you. Think of what He said to you just before. About the rock. You know how He is. He must pour cold water so that the fire of love may not consume Him. And you must have touched on something that He Himself finds difficult. I 'm sure of it. I believe that He is suffering something that we know nothing about. As if He sees that it is the Father's will that He shall suffer and die. He is young and feels terrified, and then you come and make the struggle more difficult for Him. Stand up, brother; we must be strong and cheerful and support Him."

And when they gathered together, prepared for further journeying, Jesus looked round the circle of His faithful adherents, and said, with solemn seriousness: "In a short time you will see Me no more. I go to the Father. I build My kingdom upon your faith, firm as rock, and give you all the keys to heaven. With God,

heaven and earth are one, and everything you do on earth is also done in heaven."

That is what happened on one of the heights of Lebanon when Jesus rested there with His disciples.

And then He went again to His native place, not to stay there, but to see it once more. After days of hardships which they scarcely felt, and of want which they never perceived, they came down into the fertile plains, and in the soft air was the scent of roses and of almond blossoms. They found themselves once again in their native land, where they treated them with such contempt that they had to avoid the high roads and take the side paths. When they were passing through a ravine near Nazareth, they stopped under the scanty shade of some olive-trees. They were tired, and lay down under the trees. Jesus went on a little further, where He could obtain a view of the place. He sat down on a stone, leaned His head on His hand, and looked thoughtfully out over the country. Something strange and hostile seemed to pervade it. No, He had not come in anger. Something else must be done. It was clear to Him that He must be a pledge for the attestation of the tidings.

A woman came toiling over the stones. It was His mother. She had heard how He had come down from the mountains with His disciples, and thought she would go through the ravine. Now she stood before Him. Her face, grown thin with grieving, was in shade, since to protect herself from the sun she had thrown her long upper garment over her head. A tress of her dark hair fell over one cheek; she pushed it back with one finger, but it always fell down again. She looked awkwardly at

her son, who was resting on a stone. She hesitated to speak to Him. She advanced a step nearer, and as if nothing had ever separated them, said: "Your house is quite near, my child, and you rest here so uncomfortably."

He looked at her calmly. Then He answered: "Woman, I would be alone."

She said gently: "There is now the fullest solitude at home with me."

"Where are the relations?"

"They wished to fetch you home, and have been away weeks seeking you."

Jesus pointed with a motion of His hand to His sleeping disciples: "They did not seek Me for weeks, they found Me the first day."

As if she wished to prevent Him complaining again that His kinsmen did not understand Him, His mother said: "People have long been annoyed that work was no longer done in our workshop, and so they go to a new one which has been set up in our street."

"Where is Aaron, the apprentice?"

She replied: "It is not surprising that no one will stay if the children of the house go away."

He spoke excitedly: "I tell you, woman, spare Me your reproaches and commonplace anxieties. I have something else to do."

Then she turned to the rocky wall to hide her sobs. After a while she said softly: "How can you be so cruel to your mother! It 's not for myself I complain; you can believe that. Everything is ended for me in this world. But you! You bring misfortune on the whole family, and

will yourself destroy everything. By your departed father, by your unhappy mother, I implore you: Let the faith of your Fathers alone. I know you mean well, but others do not understand that, and nothing you do is of any use. Let people be happy in their own way. If formerly they went to Abraham, they will continue to find their way to him without your help. Don't interfere with the Rabbis; that never pays. Think of John the Baptist! Everywhere the talk goes how they are lying in wait for you. Oh, my beloved child, they will disgrace you, and kill you!" She clutched the rock with her cramped fingers, and could say no more for bitter weeping.

Jesus turned His head to her, and looked at her. And when her whole body shook with her sobs, He stood up and went to her. He took her head in both His hands and drew it towards Him.

"Mother! mother! — mother!" His voice was dull and broken: "You think I do not love you. Because I am sometimes obliged to be so harsh, for everything is against Me, even My own kith and kin. But I must fulfil the will of the heavenly Father. Dry your tears; see I love you, more than any human heart can understand. Because the mother suffers double what the child suffers, so is your pain greater than that of Him who must sacrifice much for many. Mother! Sit down on this stone so that I may once again lay My head in your lap. It is My last rest."

So He laid His head on her knees, and she stroked His long hair tenderly. She was so happy, in the midst of her grief, so absolutely happy, that He should lie on her breast as He did when a child.

But He went on speaking gently and softly: "I have preached to the people in vain about faith in Me. I need not preach to you, for a mother believes in her child. They will all testify against Me. Mother, do not believe them. Believe thy child. And when the hour comes that I shall appear with outstretched arms, not on earth and not in heaven, believe in thy child. Know then that your carpenter has built the Kingdom of God. No, mother, do not weep; look up with bright eyes. Your day will be everlasting. The poor, those forsaken by every heaven, will weep to you, the blessed, the rich in grace! All the races of the earth will *praise* you!" He kissed her hair, He kissed her eyes, and sobbed Himself. "And now go, mother. My friends are waking. They must not see Me cast down."

He arose from this sweet rest. The disciples raised their heads one after another.

"Did you get some rest, Master?" asked Simon.

He answered: "Better rest than you had."

A messenger who had been sent out returned with a basket, and they paid him with a little gold ring, the last to be found on the fingers of the wanderers. They ate, and rejoiced over God's beautiful world and its gifts, and then prepared for further wanderings. Whither? Towards the metropolis.

Mary stood behind the rocks and gazed after Him as long as He was visible in the haze of the Galilean sun.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

And so they made their way towards Jerusalem for the celebration of the Passover. Long ago Moses had delivered the Jews from bondage in Egypt, and led them back to their native land. In grateful remembrance many thousands assembled every year at Jerusalem at the time of the first full moon of spring, made a pilgrimage to the Temple, and, according to the ancient custom, ate of the Paschal lamb with bitter herbs and bread made without yeast, as once they ate manna in the wilderness. At such an assembly there was of course much commerce and trafficking as well as every sort of amusement and show. The execution of criminals took place at that time, so that people were sure of one terrible spectacle; and the Rabbi in the Temple said: He who breaks the Law shall be punished according to the Law.

"I should like once to see such a thing," said the disciple Thaddeus to his comrades as they went along. "I mean such a punishment."

"You 'll easily find an opportunity in Jerusalem," replied Andrew; and added with light mockery, "to see criminals impaled is the correct merry-making for poor men. It costs nothing. And yet I do not know a costlier pleasure."

View of Jerusalem

VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH
UNIVERSITY

"How is the impaling done?" Thaddeus wanted to know.

That 's easily described," Matthew informed them. "Think of an upright pillar planted in the earth and a cross-beam near the top. The poor sinner is bound naked to it, his arms stretched out. When he has hung there in the people's eyes for a while, they break his legs with a club. For very serious crimes they sometimes fasten the limbs to the pillar with iron nails."

Thaddeus turned aside in horror. "May it never be my lot to look on at such a thing."

"Do not imagine that such talk is jest," said another. "Every one implores God that it may never strike at his relations or friends. We are all poor sinners. When our Master establishes His Kingdom this horrible mode of death will be abolished. Don't you think so?"

"Then all modes of death will be abolished," said Simon Peter. "Are you asleep when He speaks of eternal life?"

"But He says Himself that they will slay Him."

"That they wish to slay Him He means. If only He once shows them His power!"

So they often talked together, half in jest, half in simplicity, but always behind the Master's back.

A change had come over Jesus since the events on the high mountain. It was as if He was only now quite clear about His divine call, as if He had only just discovered that He was God's messenger, the Son of the heavenly Father, summoned from eternity to go down to earth to awake men and save them for a happy life with God. He felt that the power of God had been given Him to

judge souls. The devils fled before Him, He was subject to no human power. He broke with the history of His downfallen people; He destroyed the writings of antiquity, falsified through priests and learned men. He recognized that in His unity with the heavenly Father, with the Almighty, Eternal God, He was Lord of all power in heaven and on earth.

So it was with Him since that light on the mountain. But the knowledge made Him still more humble in His human form upon which such an immense burden was laid, and still more loving to those whom He saw in boundless poverty, distraction and subjection, resigned to be lost in their blindness and defiance, and yet full of sad longing for salvation.

The relations between Him and His disciples had also changed since that day. Formerly, although they had treated Him with respect they had always been on familiar terms with Him. Now they were more submissive, more silent, and their respect had become reverence. With some, love had almost become worship. And yet they always fell back into rebellion and timidity. There was one especially who disagreed with much. When, in order to avoid the high roads they went through the barren district on the other side of Jordan, and endured all sorts of hardships and privations, the disciple Judas could not forbear uttering his thoughts. He had nothing to do now as treasurer of the little band, so he had plenty of time to spread discouragement behind the Master's back. Why should not the Messiah's train of followers appear in fitting brilliance? Thoughts of death he explained as: The beggar prophet dies, the glorious Mes-

siah appears! But why first in Jerusalem? Why should they not attract attention on the way; why were the honours not allotted?

Jesus's popularity had actually again increased, and in the more thickly inhabited districts the people hurried to assemble. "The Prophet is coming through!" They streamed forth bringing provisions with them, and the sick and crippled came imploring Him to heal them. He accepted what He stood most greatly in need of from the things offered Him, but He did not work the desired miracles. He forbade His disciples even to speak of them. He was angry with the crowd who would not believe without miracles, who would not understand the signs of the times. "Directly they see a cloud rise in the west they say: It 's going to rain. If a south wind blows they know that it is going to be hot. But they do not understand the signs of a new uprising world. If they cannot understand the spiritual tokens, they cannot have others. Or would they see the tokens of Jonah, who lay three days in the whale's belly? Then they shall see how the Son of Man, after being buried for three days, shall live again."

Judas shook his head over such talk. "That does n't help much." But the others, especially John, James and Simon, did not think about the kingdom of the Messiah, or about earthly power; their hearts were filled with love for the Master. And notwithstanding, they, too, had their temptations. They often talked together of that other world where Jesus would be Eternal King, and then — those who firmly adhered to Him — would share in the glory. And in all seriousness they imagined the

offices and honours that would be theirs, and actually disputed who among them would hold the highest rank. Each boasted of his own achievements. James had brought Him the most friends in Galilee. Simon rested his claim on the fact that he had been the first to recognize in Him the Son of God. John reminded them that he came from the same place, and had once worked with Him as carpenter's apprentice. John might have said that the Master was especially fond of him but he did not say so. Simon, on the contrary, put forward most emphatically how the Master had called him the rock on which He should found His community.

When Jesus noticed how they were disputing He went to them and asked what they were discussing so eagerly.

"Master," said James boldly, "you come to us as if we had called you. We want to know who among your disciples will be first in the Eternal Kingdom. See, brother John and I would like to be nearest you, one on your right hand, the other on your left, so that we may have you between us then as we have you now."

Upon which Jesus said: "This is not the first time that you talk such nonsense. You don't know what you want. I tell you when you have done what I do, and have suffered what I shall suffer, then you may come and ask."

They replied: "Lord, we will do what you do and suffer what you suffer."

The decisive words pleased Him, and He said nothing of the enormous distance between Him and them. They were too simple to understand that. He only said: "Leave that to Him who will show you your place. For

every ruler has his rules; only One has no one over Him. Consider this: If a servant has worked hard and faithfully, he will not therefore in the evening sit at the upper end of the table and begin to eat before his master, but he will first prepare his master's food, and place a footstool under his feet. And so it is with you. Who will be the greatest must serve the others. I am not here to let Myself be served, but much more to serve, and to sacrifice Myself for others, and to render up My life as ransom for many."

It made them afraid that He should speak more and more often of giving up His life. What did it mean? If He perished Himself how could He save others? That might occur in saving people from fire and from drowning, but how could a man free a people and lead it to God by sacrificing his life? True, the heathens had their human sacrifices. Judas had his own ideas. The Master was depressed by failure, or He merely wished to prove His adherents, to find out if they had strength enough to follow Him through thick and thin. If only He could be entirely sure of that, then He would hasten like the lightnings of heaven to annihilate the enemy and glorify His own adherents. If He said Himself faith was so strong that it could remove mountains, it would be quite easy for Him to show His power at the propitious moment.

Upon this firm belief of Judas the disciple Thomas remembered the Master's actual words about faith: Who says to the mountain Go away, and cast yourself into the sea, and does not doubt but *believes* that it happens, for him it will happen. Mark, *for him* it will hap-

pen. Whether others who do not believe will see the mountain fall into the sea He did not say.

"Then, brother Thomas," said Bartholomew, "you think that things that happen through faith happen only for him who believes. They form only an inward experience, but real enough for him, because he sees them happen with his spiritual eye. But they are not real for others. If that 's the case, my friend, we should be lost. For he believes that the enemy fall, and sees them fall. But they still live and destroy us."

"That is cheap logic," said the resolute Judas. "Every one has seen how He made the lame to walk and the dead to live; even those who did not believe. Take heed! If only the Master would make some outward demonstration of His power you should see what He could do."

Others were of that opinion, and they followed — the Messiah.

But during their long wandering over the bad roads of the desert and over the fertile plains they suffered continual distress. Although they had now been some time in the plains they were not always in good humour. They had heard how the Master renounced the power and pleasure of the world and yet walked the earth strong and cheerful. It was only later that they understood how the two things could be reconciled. He enjoyed what was harmless and did not hurt others, but He attached little value to it. His senses helped Him to recognize the Father's power in nature, and to be happy in that knowledge. He did not deny the world; He spiritualized it and made it divine. Earthly matter was to

Him the building-stone for the Kingdom of Heaven. So, in spite of increasing doubt, the disciples always found that things came right, and they determined to despise the world and love life.

One day they came to a place in which there was great activity. Men were ploughing in the fields, hammering in the workshops, lithe carmen and slow camel-drivers were driving hard bargains. And it was the Sabbath! "Did heathens dwell here?" the disciples asked. No; it was a Jewish village, and the inhabitants were so pious that they seldom let a Passover go by without going up to Jerusalem. Many years ago they had heard a young man speak words in the Temple which they had never forgotten. "Men should work on the Sabbath if it was for the good of their fellows," the young man had preached with great impressiveness. Now, it is generally admitted that all work is for the good of the individual and also of the community. So they began at that time, and had never since stopped working for a single day, and great prosperity was the result.

When Jesus saw how His words at Jerusalem on that occasion had been so utterly misunderstood or were misapplied through a desire for gain, He was filled with indignation, and began to speak in the market-place: "I tell you the Kingdom of God will be taken from these lovers of gain and given to a people more worthy of it. For the good of one's fellow-men? Does good depend on the property a man possesses? Property is harmful to men; it hardens their hearts, and makes them continually fearful of loss and death. And you call that good! There was once a rich man who after years of

toiling and moiling had his barns full, and thought: Now I can rest and enjoy life. But the next night he died, and had to leave the property he had destroyed body and soul to gain to those who quarrelled and disputed over it and mocked at him. I tell you, if you gain the whole world and lose your soul — all is lost."

When He had so spoken a very old man came up to Him and said: "Rabbi, you are poor, and it is easy for you to talk. You do not know how difficult it is for a rich man to cease adding to his wealth. Oh, the delightful time when I was poor! Then I began to get money unawares, was glad of it, and began to fear I might lose it. And then as the needs of my family increased more quickly than my means, I thought the money was not sufficient, and the more one had the more one required. I am now an old man, and possess thirty sacks full of gold, and know that I cannot enjoy my wealth any more. But I cannot cease gaining and amassing. I could sooner stop breathing."

Jesus told the old man a little story: "Children in the road fought a strange boy on account of certain fragments which they collected. And when they had got a great heap together the road inspector came along, and with his spade threw the pieces into the gutter. The children raised a great cry, but he saw that there was blood on some of the fragments, and asked: 'Where did you get those from?' The children grew pale with terror, and he took them to the judge."

The old man understood. He went away and compensated all who had come to harm through him, and on his way home began to amass again.

The next day Jesus and His followers reached another village. There all was quiet, and the inhabitants lay under the fig-trees although it was not the Sabbath. Then Jesus asked: "Why do they not work?"

And one of the villagers said: "We should like to work, but we have no tools. We want spades, ploughs, sickles, and axes, but our smith is always making holiday. And it is just he who makes the best knives. There are no other smiths here."

Our wanderers then went to the smith. The man was sitting in his room, reading the Holy Scriptures and praying. One of the disciples asked him why he was not at work although it was a week-day.

The smith replied: "Since I heard the Prophet it is always Sabbath with me. For a man should not strive after material property, neither should he take any care for the morrow, but seek the Kingdom of Heaven."

Then Jesus went to the entrance of the house, and told, so that the smith could hear Him, of the man who made a journey. "Before he departed he called his servants together and gave them money with which to carry on the work of the house. He gave the first five heavy pieces of gold, the second two, and the third one. They were to keep house according to their own judgment. When after a long time the master returned, he desired his servants to account for the way in which they had employed the money. The first had increased it tenfold. 'I am glad,' said the master, 'and because you are faithful in little I will trust you much — keep the gold.' The second servant had increased the money twofold; the master praised him also, and gave him both princi-

pal and interest. Then he asked the third servant what he had done with his money. 'Master,' replied the man, 'it was n't much to begin with, so I would n't risk losing it. I should have liked to gain a second gold piece, but I might have lost the first. So I did not use it for the housekeeping, but buried it in a safe place, so that I could faithfully return it to you.' Then the master snatched the gold piece from him and gave it to the fellow who had increased his money tenfold. 'The little that he has shall be taken away from the lazy and unprofitable servant and given to him who knows how to value what he has.'"

"Do you understand?" Matthew asked the smith. "The gold pieces are the talents which God gives men, to some more, to others less. Who lets his talents lie fallow, and does not use them, is like the man who has strength and skill to work the iron, but who lays the hammer aside to brood idly over writings he cannot understand."

"How is it then," said some one, "fault is found with him who works, and likewise with him who does n't work."

Matthew tapped the speaker on the shoulder: "My friend! Everything at the right time! not to desire to do that for which you have no talent but that for which you have."

The smith laid aside his book and his phylacteries and grasped his hammer.

Then a man came by who complained that the new teaching was worthless. He had followed it, had given away all his possessions because they brought him care.

But since he had become poor, he had had still more care. So now he should begin to earn again.

"Do so," said James the younger, "but take care that your heart is not so much in it that your possessions possess you!"

And others came: "Sir, I am a ship's carpenter! Sir, I am a goldsmith! Sir, I am a stone-cutter! Are we not to put our whole heart into our work so as to produce something worthy. If our heart is not in it we cannot do good work."

"Of course," said the disciple, "you must exert your whole strength and talent in order to produce worthy work. But not for the sake of the work or the praise, but for the sake of God and the men whom you serve. And rejoice from your hearts that God creates His works through you."

A rustic once came to James and discussed prayer. The Master said you should pray in few words and not as the heathens do in a great many words, for the Father knows our needs. Well, he had once prayed just in that way, using few words, but his prayer had not been heard.

Then James said: "Don't you remember what the Master said of the man to whose door a friend came in the night and begged for bread? He had gone to bed, took no heed of his friend's knocking, and at length called out: 'Go away and let me sleep.' But the friend continued to knock and to complain that he needed bread, and began noisily to shake the door. That lasted until the man in bed could endure it no longer. Out of temper, he got up, took some bread and gave it to his

friend through the window. He did not give it him out of love, but only to be rid of him. The Master meant that with perseverance much might be attained by prayer."

The man was irritated by the disciple's explanation, and said: "What! One time He says: Pray shortly, using few words, and another: You must not leave off praying until you are heard."

And James: "Friend, you misunderstand me again. Did He say: You shall pray little? No, He said: You shall pray in few words; but without cessation, and with your whole heart, and with faith that the Father will at length hear you. And the longer He keeps you waiting for His help, the greater must be your faith that He knows why He keeps you waiting, and at last He will give you more than you asked for. If that man gave the bread in order to be rid of the annoyance, how much more will a father give the child whom He loves?"

To which the man replied: "And I did pray so, keeping on, and in faith, and yet I was not heard."

"What did you pray for?"

"Know," said the rustic, "I have a neighbour who steals the figs from my tree, and I can't catch him at it. So I prayed that he might fall from the tree and break his legs. But I was not heard."

James was obliged to laugh aloud over the foolish fellow who prayed to the merciful Father for vengeance.

"Pray for strength to pardon your neighbour and give him the figs which he seems to need more than you, and you will certainly be heard."

"And," continued the disciple, "if it is a question of praying without intercession, that does not mean to be

always folding the hands and uttering pious words; it is rather to direct one's thoughts continually with longing where God and the Eternities dwell, and to measure everything in life, small things as well as great, by that standard, in reverence and faith."

A noisy fellow asked: "How can I measure the corn I have to sell by that standard?"

"If you think not to take advantage of the buyer with mixed, damp grain, but to give him good stuff, then you are doing God's will, and are not harming your immortal soul by deceit, then your corn and your method of acting are measured by God and Eternity."

"But see," exclaimed another, "my business friend gave me bad measure when he sold me oil, and gave me half water. And it stands in the Scriptures: As it is measured to you, so shall you measure it again."

As they walked on Jesus shook His head. That His simple teaching could meet with so much misunderstanding, especially among those wanting in will towards it, who could think of nothing but their desires and bodily comforts! "No," he exclaimed sorrowfully, "they do not understand the word. They must have an illustration that they can see and feel, an illustration they will never forget."

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

GRADUALLY they were reaching the end of their journey. They met with no persecution during this last stretch. Indeed, they rather saw how some seeds, although mingled with weeds, had taken root. They reached the last hills after a night in which they had encamped under sycamore- and fig-trees. Jesus was walking in front. Although He was exhausted with the long wandering, and His feet almost refused their office, He still walked on ahead. The disciples came behind, and when they reached the top of the hill they gave a great cry. There opposite them on the tableland of the other hill lay the metropolis! In the morning sun it looked as if built of burnished gold, Solomon's Temple with its innumerable pinnacles overtopping everything.

Several of the disciples had never before been to Jerusalem, and a feeling of inspired reverence came over them at the sight of the Holy City of the kings and prophets, and here — so thought Judas and many another — here will the glory begin for us. They sat down under the olive-trees to rest and to put their clothes in order, and some even anointed their hair. Then they ate figs and the fruit of the currant bushes. But they were anxious about the Master. The exertions of the last few

weeks had told on Him, and His feet were very sore. But He said nothing. The disciples agreed that they could not let things go on so any more. James went down the slope to where he saw cottages and asked if any one had a riding horse or at least a camel on which a traveller could ride into the town. They would like to borrow it.

A little, bent old man sidled up to the stranger and assured him with much eloquence that neither horse nor camel was to be had, but that there was an ass. Yet that ass was not to be had either.

Could the Messiah any way make His entry on an ass? No, we could not begin like that. Such was the disciple's first thought. Then it occurred to him that ancient prophets had foretold: He would make His entry on an ass. James declared himself ready to take the ass.

"You take him and I don't give him," said the old man with a cunning laugh. "If anything happened to this animal I should never get over it. It is no ordinary ass, my friend!"

"It is no ordinary rider who needs him," said James.

The little, old man took the disciple to the stable. The animal stood by the manger, and was certainly of a good breed. It was not grey, but rather bright brown and smooth with slender legs, pretty, sharp-pointed ears, and long whiskers round its big, intelligent eyes.

"Is n't it the colour of a thoroughbred Arab?" said the old man.

"It 's a beautiful creature," assented James. "Will you lend it for a silver piece and much honour? It can easily be back by noon."

To which the little, old man replied: "It stands to

reason that we can make something out of it during this time of visitors. Let us make it two silver pieces."

"One silver piece and honour!"

"Let us make it two silver pieces without honour," haggled the little, old man. "A steed for princes, I tell you. In the whole of Judæa you won't find such another beauty! You must know it is of noble descent."

"We can dispense with that honour," said James, "if only it does not stumble."

Then the old man related how in the year of Herod's massacre of the innocents — "a little over thirty years ago, I think — you must know that the Infant Messiah lay in a stable at Bethlehem with the ox and the ass. The child rode away into foreign lands, as far as Egypt, they say, on that very ass. And this ass is descended from that one."

"If that 's so," said James brightly, "it 's a marvellous coincidence!" And he whispered softly in the old man's ear: "The man who will enter Jerusalem to-day on that ass is the Messiah who was born in the stable."

"Is it Jesus of Nazareth ?" asked the old man. "I will hire the animal to him for half a silver piece. In return I shall implore Him to heal my wife who has been rheumatic for years."

So they were agreed, and James led the ass up the mountain to where they were all sitting together, and had not grown tired of looking at Jerusalem. Only Jesus was wrapt in thought and looked gloomily at the shining town.

"Oh, Jerusalem!" He said softly to Himself. "If only thou wouldst beware of this time. If thou wouldst recognize wherein lies thy salvation. But thou dost not

recognize it, and I see the day when cruel enemies will pull down thy walls so that not a stone remains. . . ."

John placed his cloak on the animal, and Jesus mounted it. He rode down to the valley followed by His disciples.

And then an extraordinary thing happened. When they reached the valley of Kedron where the roads cross, people hurried up shouting: "The King is coming! The Son of David is coming!" Soon others ran out of the farms and the gardens, and kept alongside them at the edge of the road, shouting: "It is the Messiah! God be praised, He has come!"

No one knew who had spread the news of His arrival, or who first shouted the word Messiah — if, perhaps, it was not Judas. It caught on like wildfire, awaking cries of acclamation everywhere. When Jesus rode up to the town, the crowd was so great that the ass could only pace slowly along, and after He had passed the town gate the streets and squares could scarcely contain the people. The whole of Jerusalem had suddenly become aware that the Prophet of Nazareth had come! Strangers from the provinces, who had already seen and heard Him in other places, pressed forward. Those who had scorned the poor fugitive, now that He entered the metropolis with head upraised and the cry of the Messiah filling the air, were proud of Him and boasted of meetings with Him, of His acquaintance. Hands were stretched out to Him. Many cast their garments on the ground for the ass to step on. They greeted Him with olive and palm branches, and from hundreds of throats sounded: "We salute Thee! We salute Thee! Welcome, Thou long-

expected, eagerly desired Saviour!" The police, with their long staves, made a way through the streets that led to the golden house, to the king's palace. From all doors and windows they shouted: "Come into my house! Take shelter under my roof, Thou Saviour of the people!" But the crowd poured on to the palace. The disciples, who walked close behind Him and could scarcely control their agitation, were surrounded, overwhelmed, fanned with palm leaves, pelted with rosebuds. Simon Peter had been recognized as soon as the Master, and could not prevent the people carrying him on their shoulders; but he bent down and implored them to set him on the ground, for he did not wish to be lifted higher than the Master, and he feared if they held him up like that over the heads of the others many would take him for the Messiah. John had managed better; bending down and breathing heavily, he led the animal, so that the people only took him for a donkey-driver. All the rest of the disciples enjoyed the Master's honours as their own. Had they not faithfully shared misery with Him!

"Jerusalem, thou art still Jerusalem!" they said, intoxicated and filled with the storm of exultation around Him. "However well it went with us, it has never gone so well as here in Jerusalem."

Judas could not congratulate himself enough that, despite the poor procession, the Master was recognized. "I always said He would work His miracle when the time came."

"And I am full of fears," said Thomas. "They shout far too loudly. The sounds come from the throat, not from the heart."

"Oh, take yourself off. You 're always full of foreboding."

"I understand people a little. Idle townsfolk are soon enchanted; they like to enjoy themselves, and any cause serves."

"Thomas," said Matthew, reprovingly, "if it was your humility that made you heedless of the honour. But it is doubt. See the fat shopkeeper there who brings more belief out of his throat. Do you hear? 'Hail to Thee, Son of David!' he shouts, and is already hoarse through his loud shrieks of joy."

Thomas did not answer. Stooping down in irritation, he hastened through the crowd. Cries of welcome filled the whole town, and the streets along which the procession took its way were like animated palm groves. All traffic was at a standstill, windows and roofs were filled with people, all stretching their necks to see the Messiah.

Jesus sat on the animal, both feet on the one side, holding the reins with his right hand. He looked calmly and earnestly in front of Him, just as if He was riding through the dust clouds of the wilderness. When the pinnacles of the royal castle towering above the roofs of the houses were in front of Him, He turned the animal into a side street, to the Temple square. Two guards at the entrance to the Temple signed violently with their arms to the crowd to go away, but it remained standing there. The procession stopped, and Jesus got off the ass.

"He is not going to the palace, but to the Temple?" many asked in surprise. "To the Temple?"

"To the Rabbis and Pharisees? Then see what we shall see."

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

JESUS, with serious determination, quickly ascended the steps of the Temple, without even glancing at the shouting people. A part of the crowd pressed after Him, the rest gradually dispersed. But the shout: "Praised be He who has come to-day!" never ceased the whole day.

When he entered the forecourt of the Temple and looked in, He stood still in dismay. It was full of life and movement. Hundreds of people of all kinds were tumbling over each other's heels, in gay-coloured coats, in hairy gowns, with tall caps and flat turbans. They were all offering goods for sale with cries and shrieks; there were spread out carpets, candlesticks, hanging lamps, pictures of the Temple and of the ark of the covenant, fruit, pottery, phylacteries, incense, silken garments, and jewels. Money-changers vaunted their high interest, the advantage of Roman money, broke open their rolls of gold and let the pieces fall slowly into the scales in order to delight the eyes of the pilgrims. Buyers made their way through, looked scornfully at the goods, haggled, laughed, and bought. Rabbis glided round in long caftans and soft shoes so that they were not heard. They wore velvet caps on their heads below which hung their curly black or grey hair. They carried large parch-

ment scrolls under their arms — for the Sabbath was about to begin — slipped around with a dignified, yet cunning manner, bargained here and there with shopkeepers or their wives, vanished behind the curtains and then reappeared.

When Jesus had for some time observed all this confusion from the threshold, anger overcame Him. Pushing the traders aside with His arms, He cut Himself a way through. At the nearest booth he snatched up a bundle of phylacteries, swung them over the heads of the crowd, and exclaimed so loudly that His voice was heard above everything: "Ye learned teachers and ye Temple guards, do ye not see how admirably you understand the letter? It is written in the Scriptures: My house is for prayer! And you have turned Solomon's Temple into a bazaar!" Hardly had He so spoken when He overturned a table with His hand, and upset several benches with hs foot so that the goods fell in confusion to the ground under the feet of the crowd which began to give way. They stared at one another speechless, and He continued to thunder forth: "My house shall be a holy refuge for the downcast and the suffering, said the Lord. And you make it a den of assassins, and with desire of gain, leave no place for men's souls. Out with you, ye cheats and thieves, whether you higgle over your goods or with the Scriptures!" He swung the phylacteries high, even over the Rabbis and teachers, so that they bent their heads and fled through the curtained entrances. But the Rabbis, the Pharisees, and the Temple guards assembled in the side courts, and quickly took counsel how they were to seize this madman and render Him harmless. For see,

ever more people streamed through the gates into the forecourt, surrounded the angry Prophet, and shouted: "Praised be Thou, O Nazarene, who art come to cleanse the Temple! Praise and all hail to Thee, long looked-for Saviour!"

When the Rabbis saw how things were, they too raised their voices and shouted: "Praised be the Prophet! Hail to thee, O Nazarene!"

"All is won!" whispered the disciples, crowding up together. "Even the Rabbis shout!"

The Rabbis had quickly sent for the police, and now came up to Jesus, and as soon as the crowd became quieter, entered into conversation with Him.

"Wise man," said one of them, "truly you appear at the right time. The condition of our poor people is such that we know not which way to turn. You are the man who turns aside neither to right nor left, but who keeps in the straight path of justice. Tell us what you think: Shall we Jews pay the taxes to the Roman Emperor or shall we refuse?"

Jesus saw what they were driving at, and asked to be shown a coin. They were surprised that He had no money in His pockets, and handed Him one of the Roman coins current in the country.

"From whom do these coins come?" he asked.

"As you see, from the Roman Emperor."

"And whose picture is on the coin?"

"The Emperor's."

"And whose is the inscription on the coin?"

"The Emperor's."

"Whose is the coin?"

They were silent.

Jesus said; "Render unto God what comes from Him, and unto Cæsar what comes from Cæsar."

Those who saw through the case broke out into applause and shouting over the decision, and carried the crowd with them. The Rabbis were secretly furious that He had escaped their cunning snare. They had reckoned: If He says, Pay the taxes to the Roman Emperor, the people will know that He is not the Messiah but rather a servant of the foreigner. And if He says, do not pay the taxes to the Emperor, He is a demagogue, and will be taken prisoner. But now He had both Emperor and people on His side, and they must let Him alone.

"It 's going splendidly," the disciples whispered. "They ask His advice, will do nothing without Him."

The interpreters of the Law had got Him in their midst, they could not rest till they outwitted Him. So one of them asked him: "Oh, man of great wisdom, do you believe that there will be a resurrection of the dead?"

"There will be," He answered.

That marriage between man and woman is indissoluble, and that a woman may only have one husband at a time?"

"That is so."

"And that after the death of one the other may marry again?"

"It is so."

"You are right, sir," interposed a third speaker. "But suppose a woman had seven husbands one after another because they died one after another. If they all rise from the dead the woman would have seven hus-

bands at once, each is her lawful husband, and yet she may only have one."

They were in great expectation as to what He would say, for the problem seemed insoluble. And Jesus spoke: "He who asks that question knows neither the Scriptures nor the strength of God. The Scriptures promise us resurrection, and the strength of God the eternal life of the soul. There is no marriage between souls, so the question falls to the ground."

There was fresh shouting and applause, and handkerchiefs were waved from all sides. The teachers of the Law drew back in ill-humour, and dismissed the police who were waiting in the back court.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

After the excellent reception in Jerusalem, and the victory in the Temple on the first day, the disciples ventured to walk about the city fearlessly and openly. Jesus was grave and silent. They put up in a quiet inn by the gate. The disciples did not see why He should not have lodged them in a palace. They would have liked occasionly to accept the invitation of rich people, and enjoy the homage that would be paid them, but Jesus would not permit it. The festival of the Passover was at hand; there was something else to do than to be fêted and have their heads turned, they would soon need to have their heads very cool. If He accepted any of the invitations it would be the one from Bethany, where He knew He had truer friends than in Jerusalem. But meanwhile He had something more to say in the Temple.

When He went there the next day the hall was filled to overflowing with people, Rabbis, and expounders of the Law. Some had come in order to witness His glorification, others to try and ruin Him.

One of the Pharisees came up to Him and asked Him without any preliminaries which was the greatest com mandment.

Jesus ascended the pulpit and said: "I have just been

asked which is the greatest commandment. Now, I am not come to give new commandments, but to fulfil the old ones. The greatest commandment is: Love God more than everything, and thy neighbour as thyself. Those who asked Me, your teachers and interpreters of the Law, say the same but what they do does not agree with what they say. You may believe their words, but you must not imitate their deeds. They desire the hardest things of you, but do not themselves stir a finger. And what good they do, is done in the eyes of the people, so that they may win praise. They like to take the first place at festivals, and to be greeted on all sides as the expounders of Holy Writ. That honour they do not offer to God, but to themselves. I tell you he who exalts himself will be cast down."

Some of the Pharisees interrupted Him and contradicted Him. He turned to them face to face, and in a louder voice said: "Yes, you expounders of Holy Writ, you seek to shine outwardly. You keep your vessels clean on the outside, and your wool soft, but inside you are full of wickedness and desire of plunder. Ye who sit in the seats of learning and preach morals are like tombs adorned with flowers outside, but full of corruption inside. You despise the fathers because they persecuted the prophets; you kill the prophets whom the Lord sends to-day, or you let them be contemned. And when they are dead you build them fine tombs. Cursed be ye, ye hypocrites! You forbid others to be the bringers of salvation; you even stone them. You will not go yourselves into the Kingdom of Heaven, and you keep out those who wish to go in. Cursed be ye, ye apparently holy,

who take to yourselves the houses of widows and the property of orphans under the pretence of love! Cursed be ye, ye sneaks who travel by land and water, who creep into schools and hospitals to win people to your belief. And when they have accepted your belief, you torture them with everlasting fire and make of them children of hell. Ye fools and cheats, you teach them to swear under a secret reserve, to value the sound of the word, not its meaning! Ye fools and blind guides who lead the people to petty, unimportant things, to outward observances and customs, instead of to the important things — to justice, to mercy, and to love! That is as wise as to strain out the gnat and swallow the camel. Ye snakes and vipers! Be ye cursed eternally! Even if God sent His Son you would crucify Him, and would pretend you did it for the sake of the people because He was a traitor. But know that you will have to pay for the blood of the heaven-sent Messenger! The time is not far off when the blood of your children will flow in streams through the streets of Jerusalem!"

While Jesus was speaking His disciples trembled. They had never seen Him so consumed with anger. But it was too soon! He had no army to protect Him if they should attack Him. The crowd was immensely excited, and the applause grew to a storm. Many screamed with delight that such words were at last spoken; others looked threateningly at the Pharisees. They — the Rabbis and Pharisees — had all kinds of excuses ready against the terrible accusations, but it seemed to them wiser not to honour the outbreak of this "seeker of the people's favour" with any answer, and to leave the Temple at once, unnoticed, by the back entrances.

The broad square in front of the Temple was a sea of heads. As many persons as possible had pushed their way in, but the greater number surrounded the enormous building, and shouted incessantly in a shrill voice: "We, too, want to hear Him! Let Him come out and preach in the open air so that we may see Him. Hail to the Messiah King! He shall reign in the golden palace and in Solomon's glorious Temple!"

When Jesus stepped out of the Temple into the confusion, he heard the shouts, and mounted the plinth of one of the immense pillars that surrounded the building. And here He again spoke, and looking at the city He hurled these words at the crowd:

"You boast of your glorious Temple! I can tell you that not one stone of this building shall remain on the other. For you have heaped up crime upon crime. I find none of you thirsty, but you are all drunk. The cup is full, and the present generation shall know it. When desolation comes over the land, then let him who is in the valley flee to the mountain, and let him who is in the field not return into the city, and let him who is on the roof not come down, in order to fetch his coat from the house. Fire and sword will meet him. Woe to the women and children in those days: they will cry: Mountains fall on us and crush us. It will be a wailing and lamentation such as has never before been under the sun, and never will be again. Unappeasable anger will overtake the people, Jerusalem will be destroyed, and its inhabitants be led into captivity by strange nations. And men will be judged according to their good or evil disposition. Of two who are in the field one will be accepted, the other

cast out. Of two who lie in the same bed one will be heard, the other forsaken. The grain shall be gathered in the barns, the weeds shall be burnt in the fire."

The words caused a murmuring in the crowd, and one of the disciples wrung his hands in despair: "This will end badly!"

Then His tone became gentler: "But do not despair; the days of that misery shall be shortened. I will beg for it. Where there is carrion there are eagles. From the nation of sinners shall arise the testimony of God. As the trees blossom and sprout after the hard winter, so shall the Kingdom of Heaven blossom forth from the purified people. For the glad tidings will penetrate through the whole universe, and happy will be the nations which accept it."

"Heaven upon earth?" asked some one from the swaying crowd. Jesus answered: "Heaven upon earth as you wish it — never! For the earth is too weak to bear heaven. It will be ruined, and the destruction of Jerusalem will only be an image. Much distress will precede it. False prophets will come and say: We are the saviours of the world! Their spirit and their truth will blind the people, but it will not be the Holy Spirit or the eternal truth. A great weariness and despair will come over men's souls, and they will long for death. And as men gradually lose their light, their reason, so will the stars in the sky be extinguished; the sea will cover the land, and the mountains be sunk in the sea. But the fiery token of the Son of God will appear in the dark sky."

"What is the token?" asked one of the grey-bearded Rabbis.

"He who has eyes will soon see it tower over Golgotha, the token with which the Lord will come to judge. His angels will announce Him in the air, but not in His lowliness as at Bethlehem. He will come in all the strength and glory in which He sits at the right hand of the Father. And He will give back their bodies to the souls, and reward the faithful with eternal joy, and the obdurate with eternal punishment."

With terrified countenances and whispered words the people asked: "When will this happen?"

"Watch, ye children! God alone knows the day and hour. These worlds pass away; you see it every day. Everything changes; only the tidings of the Father remain for ever."

This speech of the Prophet made a deep impression on the people. They no longer shouted or rejoiced; they no longer looked on His countenance as gladly as the day before, the glowing eyes burnt with such terrible anger. They became silent, or only whispered to each other. Had he understood? one asked his neighbour quietly. They had all understood, but each something different. They were all impressed with the words: they affected every one; and groups of people, as they made their way out, talked over the Prophet's speech, and many began to dispute about it.

"I don't expect much from this Messiah," said an innkeeper to his guests. "As far as I can see, He promises more ill than good. If He can offer nothing better than the destruction of Jerusalem and the Last Judgment, He might just as well have stayed at home at Nazareth."

"No, I 've never been a great friend of the Last Judgment," said a dealer in skins from Jericho.

"It 's quite true," shouted a tailor, "nothing good comes from Galilee!"

"Neither from Judæa," laughed an unpatriotic tailor from Joppa. "I tell you I expect nothing until we have expelled all our Jewish princes and Rabbis and become Romans right through. The Emperor of Rome is the true Messiah. All the rest should be impaled."

So they gave vent to their various opinions.

The Rabbis rubbed their hands in satisfaction. "He is not clever enough to be dangerous. He will hardly come within the arm of the law after what He has said."

"But the people will judge Him," said one of the oldest among them, "the people themselves. Take heed, I prophesy so much."

"No, indeed, He is not a man of fair words," said one of the overseers. " He does not flatter the mob, and my contempt for the Nazarenes is less than it was yesterday. If He falls in the eyes of the people, He rises in mine."

"The man makes me think that He will soon give Himself up. Did you hear His allusion to Golgotha?"

"My soul, a famous prophet must be right in something," mocked one of the high priests. "I think we should seek counsel of our rulers, so that we may ensure quiet for the festival. You understand me?"

"It is worth consideration with all this concourse of people."

"I think He has poured enough water on the fire,"

said the high priest. "No one would stir a finger if we took Him."

"Let's wait till the festival is over. You can never reckon surely on the mob."

"We have laid traps for Him all over the country, and then let Him insult us here in the Temple itself. No, I don't fear the mob any more. The law is more hazardous."

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

The little town of Bethany was situated in a narrow valley at the foot of the Mount of Olives. There was a large house there belonging to a man who had been ill for many years; formerly he had been filled with despair, but since he had become an adherent of the Nazarene, he was resigned and cheerful. The incurable disease became almost a blessing, for it destroyed all disquieting worldly desires and hopes, and also all fears. In peaceful seclusion he gave up his heart to the Kingdom of God. When he sat in his garden and looked out over the quiet working of Nature, he hardly remembered that he was ill. He was so entirely imbued with the happiness of life in the Kingdom of Heaven, and his prayers were full of gratitude that death could not destroy such a life, for it was immortal, and would be carried into eternity with the immortal soul.

Two of the inmates of his house felt the same. Magdalen, his wife's sister, the fallen woman of Magdala, lived with them since she had been obliged to part from the Master. Now she heard with a fearful joy that Jesus was in Jerusalem. Her brother Lazarus, was in still greater excitement about it. The youth declared that the Master had accomplished the greatest thing of all in regard to

him. He could not talk about it enough, and was irritated if they did not receive his tale as the very newest thing, although it had happened months before, when Jesus had been in the wilderness of Judæa. They had marvelled at the event beyond all measure, but when the great miracle came to be related every day, it got commonplace. "Just let one of you experience what dying is like," Lazarus would often exclaim, interrupting a lively conversation. "When you lie there and get cold. They put on a shroud, tie a handkerchief round your head, stretch you out on a board, and lament that you are dead. You are dead, but it is n't quite what you thought. You know about it; you are there when they put you into the sack, carry you to the grave, and rend their garments for grief. You are there when your body is buried in the damp, everlasting darkness, and begins to mingle with the earth. Your poor soul gathers itself together to utter a cry for help, but your breast is dead, your throat is dead. And in this agony of death, which never ceases, a man comes by, lays his hand on your head, and says, 'Lazarus, get up!' and your pulse begins to beat, and your limbs grow warm again, and you get up and live! And live! Do you know what it means — live?"

Then Magdalen went to her brother and calmed him, and told him that it is a great thing to awake a dead body to life, but a still greater thing to bring a dead soul to life!

Now this family of Bethany had sent to Jerusalem and invited the Master to go to their house with two of His travelling companions in order that He might repose Himself after His long wanderings in homelike se-

curity. Jesus thought it was time to leave the city for a little, and accepted the invitation. His disciples were sorry. They each desired some hospitable house in order that after so long a time of hardship they might once again be glad with the Master; they thought there was every reason, considering His victory. When the disciples found that only two of them could go with Him, they were distressed, for all had been obliged to share the hard times with Him.

"Have you ever lacked anything with Me?" He asked. "Have you suffered want?"

"No, Lord, never!" For by His side they had never felt want. The Master rejoiced over their disinterestedness, and the ten decided that the youngest and the oldest should go with Him, that was just. So John and Simon Peter were chosen. The rest found lodging with citizens of the town. Joseph of Arimathea, who had property round Jerusalem, received some of the disciples. There was the rich Simeon, who had once ridden out into the wilderness to gain eternal life, and had nearly lost his mortal life. Since then he had changed his opinion about the value of great possessions; at least, he let the needy share them, and he received some of the disciples. James had business in Bethpage, on the farther slope of the Mount of Olives, where he had hired the ass. He took Andrew with him. The animal had been sent back, but had not yet been paid for. The little old man came to meet them in most friendly fashion. He was proud beyond everything that his noble brown ass had had so great an honour. He had himself been in the city, and had heard how the Prophet reproved the Phari-

sees in the Temple. That was the finest day of his life. If the Master would only come and heal his wife of her rheumatism, he would be converted.

That was a good thing, said James, because they had n't any money with which to pay him. The little old man whistled in surprise. He saw now that people were right when they set no store by men of Galilee.

In order to ave their countryman's honour, they offered to work in the garden until they had fully paid the debt. So both the disciples set to digging, and thought, perhaps, of the parable of the labourers in the vineyard. Then they discussed the events in Jerusalem, and how they would rather be ministers of the Messiah in the golden palace than be doing such hard work here.

When Jesus with John and Peter reached Bethany, their host Amon had himself pushed in his wheeled chair to meet them, and called to his wife, Martha, to make haste and come and pay her respects to the guests. She had, she said, no time for that; she had things to look after, in the parlour, the dining-room, everywhere, to see that all was in order, if need be to lend a helping hand herself. The children of the servants were playing about in the courtyard, and a contented, homelike feeling pervaded everything. Suddenly the slender form of Lazarus hurried up, and lay down at the Master's feet. He recognized him, and said: "Lazarus, you have your life in order to stand upright." The youth got up. And then, hesitating and half afraid, Magdalen approached. He greeted her in silence.

She, too, said nothing. But when they were at table she knelt before Him, and anointed His feet. She dried

them with her hair and wept. The pleasant odour of the oil filled the room, and Peter whispered to his neighbour: "Such ointment must cost a mint of money! If she had given it to the poor, He would have been better pleased."

Jesus heard what he said: "What is wrong, Peter? She does good to Me so long as I am here. When I 'm no longer with you, you 'll still have the poor. She has shown Me a sign of love that will never be forgotten."

Peter was ashamed, and said softly to his neighbours: "He is right. It often happens that people leave a good deed undone, and say, 'We 'll give something, therefore, to the poor.' That 's what they say, but they do neither one nor the other. He is right."

They ate and drank amid the pleasant homely surroundings, and were very cheerful. Magdalen wanted to sit quite at the lower end of the table, but the Master desired her to sit on His right hand. Her enthusiastic glance hung on His face, and it seemed as if she drank from His mouth every word which He spoke. Jesus was indefatigable in narrating legends and parables, every one of which contained some great thought. If He dealt harshly with human foolishness before the people, He treated it as seriously now, but with warm sympathy that went to the hearts of all His hearers. The invalid host was delighted, and signed to his wife to listen to the Master's words. But Martha was continually occupied in looking after the bringing in of the dishes, in seeing that everything was as perfect as possible, and in serving her guests, and was vexed with her sister Magdalen who sat there by His side, and troubled herself about noth-

ing. When she again brought in a dish, Jesus put His hand gently on her arm, and said: "Martha, how busy you are. Do leave off for a little, and come and sit down. We 've had more than enough with all these nice things, and you bring us still more. Do like your sister; she has chosen the better part—spiritual food instead of bodily."

So Martha sat down, and she too watched His mouth, but less for the sake of what He said than to see how He, liked the food. He observed this, and said with a smile. "Every one does good in his own way." And He continued to reveal in attractive fashion the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven. But Martha always interrupted Him with remarks on the dishes, with orders to the servants, until Jesus became almost annoyed, and said harshly: "Don't you understand that I will nourish you? The soul is the only important thing."

Then they also spoke of the day. Amon congratulated Him prettily on the great victory at Jerusalem.

"Do you call that a victory?" asked Jesus. "Amon, do you know men so little? They see in Me the Messiah King who will conquer the Empire to-morrow. They, blind creatures, they have no idea of *My* Kingdom. They are pleased with words that destroy, they do not want to hear words that build up. It 's an empty-headed people who can only be roused by need and oppression. But they will be aroused."

After dinner He lay down on cushions, the softest that Martha could find in the house. Young John's curly head lay on His breast, Magdalen sat at His feet. Peter lay near by on a carpet; a little farther off sat Amon in his wheeled chair, with Martha stroking his white hair.

John was particularly happy to-day. He had never seen the Master so calm and gentle, and yet something depressed the disciple. At the former remark about the people he observed: "Master, if they knew how deeply ou loved them."

"They ought to know it."

"But they cannot know it from the way in which you peak to them."

"The way in which I speak to them?" said Jesus, and stroked the disciple's soft hair. "That is just my John all over. He cannot understand that you do not stroke buffaloes with peacocks' feathers. I 'm too harsh with these hypocrites, these obdurate, indifferent men. When I refuse those who desire daily profit from Me in the way of miracles, when I lay bare the carefully-concealed thoughts of their hearts, then I am harsh. And when I destroy their childish love of the world, their desire for pretty things — then I am harsh. And when they strut about with their condemnations and their hard-heartedness, and tread the weak underfoot out of greed and hostility, as proud as the heathens who bring human sacrifices to their gods, I should like to chastise them with a whip of scorpions. But when the forsaken come to Me, and penitent sinners trustfully seek refuge with Me, then, John, I am not hard."

The voices of children playing in the courtyard sounded through the open windows. Jesus turned to His hostess and said: "Martha! You have excellently entertained me in your house. Will you give me yet another treat?"

"What is it, Master? Nothing that you desire shall be unattainable if I can help it."

"The little ones — let them come up."

"My poor, good boy! he will cry his eyes out that he was n't here to-day. He is in Jerusalem."

"May he be under God's protection. Let those who are playing in the courtyard come up."

They came shyly in at the door, two dark little girls, and a fair boy, who carried a carved wood camel in his hand. When Jesus spread out His arms, they went to Him, and were soon at home, holding up their little red mouths, in which He put fruit from the table. Peter, who would have liked to take a nap, was not particularly pleased with the little guests, but was glad that the Master petted them and joked with them. "If it pleases Him," thought the old man, "it hurts neither Him nor us. He is often angry about unhappy marriage ; what an example of a happy one He would afford! He would not have far to seek." The disciple was troubled by other thoughts, but it was difficult to speak to Him about some things.

Then Jesus said to the boy: "Benjamin, mount your camel, ride to that man over there, and ask him why he is so silent."

Peter accepted the invitation to join in the conversation, but scarcely in a happy fashion. "Master," he said hesitatingly, "what I have to say is scarcely suited to this pleasant day."

Such remarks, said Martha humorously, were of the right sort to add to the cheerfulness of the company. Peter was not the man to keep a secret long. Turning to the Master, he said: "Early to-day in the city, I heard some talk, and they always wrong you."

"What were they saying, Peter?"

"They said that the Prophet was a man of fair words, but that He did nothing. He never once healed the sick who came to him from great distances."

"They say that?"

"Yes, sir, they say those sorts of things."

Jesus raised His head, and looked cheerfully round the circle. While He rocked one of the little girls on His knee, He said calmly: "So they say I only talk and do nothing. In their sense they are right. I don't pray, they mean, because they don't see Me do it. I don't fast, because we can't eat less than a little, except when we sit at a luxurious table like Martha's. I don't give alms because My purse is empty. What good do I do, then? I don't work, because in their eyes My work does n't count. I don't work miracles on their bodies, because I am come to heal their souls. Amon, say, would you exchange the peace of your heart for sound legs?"

"Lord!" exclaimed Amon vivaciously, "if they say you do nothing good, just let them come to the house of old Amon at Bethany. You came under my roof, and my soul was healed."

"And you brought me resurrection and life," shouted Lazarus passionately from the other end of the room.

"And me, more than that," said Magdalen, looking up at Him with moist eyes. And then she bent down and kissed His feet.

And Peter exclaimed: "I was a mere worm, and he made me a man. He does more than all the Rabbis and physicians and generals put together."

Then John turned to him and asked: "Brother, why did n't you talk like that to the people in Jerusalem? Were you afraid of them?"

"Is the man a coward?" asked the boy, pointing with his hand to Peter. "Then let him play lion and sheep with us in the courtyard."

Jesus shook His head over such talk, and said: "No, my Peter is not a coward, but somewhat unstable for a rock. Who seeks at his age to prepare himself for the Kingdom of God is indeed no weakling."

Martha, who had gone out to look after the supper, called into the room that the children's mother wanted them to go to her to read the Haggadah.

The little ones pulled long faces. "To read the Haggadah!" murmured the boy in a tone far too contemptuous of the holy Passover book.

"Don't you like to read about God, my child?" asked Jesus.

"No," replied the boy crossly.

John pinched his red cheek. "Naughty boy! Good boys always like to hear about God."

"But not always to read about Him!" said the little one. "The Haggadah is boring to death."

Then Jesus: "He is of the unhappy ones by whom God is injured through the letter. Would you rather stay with Me, children, than go and read the Haggadah?"

"Yes, yes, we 'll stay with you." And all three hung round His neck.

Martha informed the mother: "They are reading the Haggadah with six arms."

CHAPTER THIRTY

Two days were spent in this quiet, cheerful fashion. Then Jesus said to the disciples: "It is over; we must return to Jerusalem."

The festival was to be passed in the city, and James had hired a room in which the Master and His twelve faithful friends could solemnly celebrate the Passover. His disciples again gathered round Him: but they looked anxious. For they had had unpleasant experiences in their walks through the town. The mood of the people had entirely changed; they spoke little of the Messiah but rather of the demagogue and betrayer of the people, just in the same tone as had been used in Galilee. Only here the expressions were more forcible, and accompanied with threatening gestures. In front of the town gates, where there was a rocky hill. Thomas had watched two carpenters nailing crossbeams to long stakes. He asked what they were doing, and received in answer that criminals were impaled on the festival. Questioning them more closely, he learned that thev were desert robbers.

"Desert robbers?" said a passer-by. "What are desert robbers? There are desert robbers every year. This time quite different people are to be hoisted up."

"Yes, if they 're caught," said another. "His followers are burrowing somewhere in the city, but He Himself is flown. It 's too absurd how the police seek everywhere, and can't find out where He is."

Thomas did not want to hear any more, and took himself off.

Judas heard similar things, only more plainly — quite clearly in fact — it was the Master who was meant. So far had it come! And all the enthusiasm had been false. The olive branches and palm leaves were not yet all trodden away, and bore witness to the Messiah jubilation of four days ago. And to-day? To-day the police were searching for Him! But was n't it His own fault? To run into the jaws of your enemies, and to irritate and abuse them — nothing else. If He had only stirred a fold of His cloak to show who He was. Who believed that He had walked on the water: that He had brought the dead to life? They only laughed when such things were related. Why did He not do something now? Just one miracle, and we should be saved. Perhaps He is intentionally letting things come to the worst, so that His power may appear the more impressive. They will take Him and put Him in chains, lead Him out amid the joyful cries of the mob, and suddenly a troop of angels with fiery swords will come down from heaven, destroy the enemy, and the Messiah revealed will ascend the throne. That will happen, must happen. The sooner the better for all of us. How can it be hurried on? His indecision must be changed into determination. I wish they had Him already, so that we could celebrate a glorious Passover. Such were the thoughts of the disciple, Judas

Iscariot. Sunk in deep reflection he walked through the streets that evening. The pinnacles and towers glowed in the dull red of the setting sun. He met several companies of soldiers: a captain stopped him and asked if he did not come from Galilee?

"I think you 're asking about the Prophet," replied Judas; "no, I 'm not He."

"But I 'm certain you know about Him."

Judas drew a deep breath, as if on the point of saying something. But he said nothing, pursued his way, and came to the house where they were all gathered round the Master.

The room was large and gloomy. A single lamp was suspended over the large table, covered with a white cloth, that stood in the centre, around which they were already seated. The Master was so placed that the whole table could see Him. A large dish with the roasted Paschal lamb stood before Him. By its side were the Passover herbs in shallow bowls. On the table were other bowls, and the unleavened bread baked for the festival in remembrance of the manna eaten in the wilderness. Near the centre of the table was a beaker of red wine. They were silent or speaking in whispers, so that the steps of Judas, as he entered, gave an echo. He was almost terrified by the echo. Then he greeted them in silence with a low bow and sat down, just opposite John, who sat at the Master's right, while Peter sat at His left.

There was solemn silence. The first Passover in Jerusalem! Jesus took one of the unleavened cakes, broke it, and laid the pieces down. James divided the lamb into thirteen portions.

"We are thirteen at table," whispered Thaddeus to his neighbour Bartholomew. He was silent. They did not eat, and sat there and did not talk. The lamp flickered, and the reddish reflection hovered about the table. Now Jesus began to speak.

"Eat and drink. The hour approaches."

John placed his hand tenderly on His, and asked: "What do you mean, Lord, when you say: The hour approaches?"

"My friends," said Jesus, "you will not understand how what will happen this night can be. They will come and condemn Me to death. I shall not flee, for it must be so. I have to give testimony of the Father in heaven and of His tidings, and therefore I am ready to die. If I were not willing to die for My words, they would be like sand in the desert. If I were not willing to die, My friends would not be justified, and would doubt Me. A good shepherd must lay down his life for his flock."

"Master," said Thomas, and his voice trembled, "not when you live, only when you die, must we doubt you."

Then Jesus looked sadly round the circle, and said: "One among you doubts Me, though I live."

"What do you mean by that, Lord?" asked Judas.

And Jesus: "The Son of Man goes His appointed way. Yet it would be better for him never to have been born. One of mine will betray Me this night."

As if struck down by a heavy weight they were silent for a moment. Then they exclaimed: "Who is it? Who is it?"

"One of the twelve who sit at this table."

"Master," exclaimed Peter, what causes that gloomy thought? No one is untrue."

And Jesus to him: "Simon Peter and another at this table will deny Me before morning cock crow."

They were silent, for they were all greatly afraid.

After a while He continued speaking. "It must happen as the Father in His wisdom has determined. But the time of work begins for you. You will be My apostles, My ambassadors, who will travel over the world to tell all the nations what I have told you. You shall be the salt of humanity, and season it with wisdom. You shall be the yeast which causes it to ferment. To others I have said, Do the good work secretly; to you I say, Let your light shine forth as an example. Be wily as the serpent, and let not hypocrites deceive you; be like clever money-changers, who accept only good coins and refuse the false. Be without guile, like doves, and go forth, innocent as the sheep who go among wolves. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. Where you sow peace for others, there will be the sword for you. It will also happen that your message of peace will awake discord; one brother will dispute with the others, children will be against their parents, because some will be for Me and others against Me. But the time will come when they will be united, one flock under the care of one shepherd. Then there will be a great fire on earth, that of enthusiasm for the Spirit and for Love. I hope it will soon be burning! Do not despair that with your simplicity and want of eloquence, your ignorance of the language you must travel in strange lands. At the time when you speak, My Spirit will speak in you, in

every eloquent tongue. If you are silent, then the stones must speak, so important is it that something shall be said. You must speak to the lowly of the glad tidings; you must speak to the mighty who possess the power to kill your body, but not your soul. Days of temptation and persecution will come, I will incessantly implore the Father to stand by you. Be not cast down. If I did not now depart, the Spirit could not enter into you. The visible is an enemy of the invisible. I have spoken to you much in parables, so that it may the better remain in your memory. I had still much to say to you; My Spirit will speak to you, and you will understand by it more easily than when I spoke in parables. I build My community on you, unlock the Kingdom of God to all who seek it. What you do on earth in My name will also count in heaven with the Father. And now I give you My peace as the world cannot give it. I remain with you by My Spirit and My Love."

. . . . . .

The great words were spoken. A solemn peace fell on their hearts. Judas went out. The rest sat on in silence and looked at the Master with unbounded affection. They could not understand what He had said, but they felt they were words before which the earth would shake and the heavens fall down.

And now something extraordinary happened. It was not a miracle, it was more than a miracle. Jesus stood up, took a towel and a washing-bowl, knelt before each, and washed his feet. In their astonishment they offered no resistance. When He came to Peter, Peter said, "No, Master, you shall not wash my feet."

To which Jesus: "If I do not do it, then you are not Mine."

And Peter: "If that is so, then wash my face and hands, too, O Lord! so that it may be evident how very much I am yours."

Then Jesus: "You call me Lord, and I wash your feet. That is so that you may know that among men there is no Lord, only brothers, who shall serve one another. See, I love you. No one can give a greater proof of his love than to die so that his friends may live. So I leave you this maxim: Brothers, love one another. As I love you, love one another."

John, overcome by those words, sank on his knees, and, sobbing, laid his head on His lap. And Jesus said once more: "Children, love one another."

Then He again sat down to the table. They were all silent. Jesus took bread in His hand, lifted it a little towards heaven that it might be blessed, and broke it in two. He handed the pieces to the right and left of Him, and said: "Take it and eat it. It is My body that I sacrifice for you."

They took it. Then He seized the beaker of wine, lifted it to heaven that it might be blessed, sent it round, and said: "Take it and drink. It is My blood that is shed for you."

And when they had all drunk, He spoke the words: "Do this in My memory."

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

When the disciples separated after the meal, notwithstanding their fears, they did realize that it was a farewell. They sought their lodgings. Only John, Peter, and James accompanied the Master when He left the town in the dark night and descended the valley to the foot of the Mount of Olives. There was a garden there. White stones lay between the savin trees and the weeping cypresses, fresh spring grass covered the ground. Jesus said to His companions: "Stay here a little." He Himself went farther into the garden. The sky was covered by a thin veil of cloud, so that the moon shed a pale light over the earth. The town on the mountain rose up dark and still; no sound was to be heard except the rippling of the brook Kedron in the valley. Jesus stood and looked up through the trees towards heaven. He breathed heavily, and drops of perspiration stood on His brow. He felt a great agony, an agony He had never before known. Had He not often thought of death, and in His mind felt quite reconciled to it? Did He not know that the heavenly Father would receive Him? Now He still belonged to this sweet life, and the way was yet open to Him to escape death. Has your soul become so weak that you are troubled by the idea that the enemy is al-

ready at hand to seize you? Can He not go over the mountain to Jericho, into the wilderness, to the sea? No, not flight. Of His own free will to go before the judges in order to stand by what He said. But this yielding to the power He had offended means death. He sank down on the ground so that His head touched the grass, as if He would draw the earth to Him with eager arms, "Must it be, O Father? I should like to stay with men in order to bring them nearer to Me. Who will guide my dependents, for they are weak? Protect them from evil, but do not take them from the world. Let them live and spread Thy name. If it is possible, let Me stay with them. But if it must be, take this agony from Me and stand by Me. But I must not desire, My God, only humbly entreat. If it is Thy determination that I shall suffer all human pain, let Thy will be done. Accept this sacrifice for all who have angered Thee. If Thou desirest it, I will take the sins of the world upon Me, and atone for them till Thou art appeased. But if it may be avoided, Father, My Father who art in heaven, have mercy on Thy Son, who has announced Thy mercy." So He prayed, and in His infinite distress He longed for His disciples. He went to them and found them asleep. They were sleeping like innocent children, and knew nothing of His terrible struggle. He woke Peter, and said: "I am sad to perishing. You ought to watch with Me in this hour."

The disciple pulled himself together with difficulty and shook the others. When Jesus looked at the poor fellows, He thought: "What are they to Me?" He left them and went away, in order to fight through it alone. And

again he prayed: "Help Me Lord; God do not forsake Me." But heaven was silent, the solitude was unendurable, and He once more went back to His disciples. They were again fast asleep. They rested so peacefully, they were tired by the cruel world. Then let them sleep. Drops, like blood, ran down His forehead and fell on the ground. A third time He turned to the Father: "In My forsaken condition I call on Thee alone. No one hears Me in My agony. They sleep, and the spears are clattering on the road. Lord God, send Thy angels to protect Me!"

Not a leaf stirred; there was not a breath of air. Heaven remained deaf and dumb.

"It is the silent word of God. I submit to His will."

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

WHEN Judas sat in the room among the twelve, he felt so bewildered and confused that he did not hear every one of His words. So he got up, left the room, and rushed through the empty streets of the city. "One of those who sit at this table will betray Me!" He knows men's thoughts. That gives Him entire power. But He does not know, He does not wholly know, He must be forced to use His power. Judas could think of nothing else. The thought with which hitherto he had only played, now took violent possession of his head and heart. He went through the city gate which was not closed at this Passover time. He would spend the night among the bushes; but see — there goes the Master along the road with three of His disciples. Judas stretched out his head between the branches in order to look after them. They went towards the valley. Were they going to Bethany? Now he knew what to do. He quickly pulled himself together and went straight off to the Roman captain.

"I know where He is."

"You want money for this Jew?"

"That 's not my reason for telling you."

"Yet you tell me."

"Because I can't wait any longer. You will learn to know Him."

"Well, where is He?"

"I 'll go with the soldiers. There are several persons with Him, I will go up to one and kiss His cheek. That will be He."

"How much do you want for this service of love, you low wretch?" asked the captain.

"If you insult me, all right. Seek Him without me. I know what I want."

"Well, what do you want? Are thirty silver pieces enough?"

"The Man is worth more."

"I do not haggle."

"Give what you please. I think it 'll cost you very dear."

The bargain was struck. Judas, the treasurer, put the coins in the common purse, and thought: If we had only had sooner what is now scarcely any longer needful! Then a troop of soldiers placed him in their midst, and, carrying torches, the procession marched out of the town and down into the Valley of Kedron. They crossed the brook, and at the entrance to the garden gate intended to proceed to Bethany. But a fleeting, spying glance of Judas observed by the glimmer of the moon figures lying on the ground under a bush. He stopped, looked, and recognized the brothers. He signed to the soldiers to enter the garden quietly. To walk quietly is the way of traitors, not of warriors. The sound of marching and the clash of swords woke the disciples. It is a different awakening from the gentle monition of the Master! They jumped up and hastened to where He was kneeling.

Judas came forward and said: "Did I frighten you?" Then he went up to Jesus: "You are still awake, Master?" He bent down in greeting, kissed Him lightly on the cheek, and thought in tremulous expectation: Messiah King, now reveal Thyself!

Then the soldiers rushed up. They had been joined by a mob armed with sticks and cudgels, just as when notorious criminals are taken. Jesus went forward a few steps to meet them and offered His hands to them to be bound. John threw himself between, but he was dashed to the ground. James struggled with two of the soldiers, Peter snatched the sword of a third, and hacked at one of the Temple guards so that his ear flew from his body.

"What are you doing?" Jesus called to the disciple. "If you interfere they will kill you. You will conquer not with the sword, but with the word. But you, O people of Jerusalem! You behave to Me as cruelly as if I was a murderer. And only five days ago you led Me into the city with palms and psalms. What have I done meanwhile? I sat in the Temple among you. Why did you not take Me then? "

They mocked at Him. "Is n't to-day soon enough for you? Can't you wait any longer for your ladder to heaven? Patience, it is already made."

When the disciples heard such allusions, and the Master calmly surrendered Himself, they drew back. The sticks and spears clashed together, the crowd jolted along, the torches flickered, and so the procession went up to the city. Judas stood behind the trunk of a tree, looked through the branches at the dread procession, and his eyes started from his head in terror.

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

THE judges were awakened at midnight. The Jewish High Priests that they might accuse Him, the heathen judges that they might condemn Him. The High Priest Caiaphas left his couch with pleasure; he was glad that they had caught Him at last, but he thought that the High Priest Annas should make the accusation; he was younger, better acquainted with the Roman laws, and would carry through the ticklish business in the best way. He, Caiaphas, would hold himself ready for bearing testimony or sealing documents at any minute. Annas, too, was delighted that the Galilean, who had insulted the Pharisees in the Temple in such an unprecedented manner, was caught at last. He would settle the matter this very night, before the people, on whom no reliance was to be placed, could interfere. With respect to the accusation, the whole high priesthood of Jerusalem must meet in order to take counsel over the difficult case. As a matter of fact there was nothing they could legally bring against the man. His speeches to the people, His proceedings in the Temple were, unfortunately, not sufficient. Some crime — a political one if possible — must be proved against Him, if the heathen, the Roman governor, was to condemn Him.

So they met at the house of Caiaphas to take counsel. They carried innumerable scrolls under their arms, in which were written all conceivable things since the first appearance of the Nazarene. The Galilean Rabbis especially had sent volumes in order to disgrace Him. Yet all this would not be sufficient for the governor. Some definite point must be clearly worked out.

Then Jesus was brought in. His hands were bound, His dress was soiled and torn, His countenance very sad. The crowd had already had proof of His courage. He stood there quietly. Terror He no longer felt, sadness alone lay in His eyes. They turned over the scrolls and spoke together in whispers. It was made known that they would be glad to hear any one who could bring testimony against Him. But no one offered, so that the priests looked at each other in bewilderment. Those who struck Him and insulted Him must surely know why they did it!

At length a deformed man came forward. He was certainly only a poor camel-dealer, but he knew something. The story of the whale! The Galilean said that, just as the whale cast up Jonah after three days, so would He go forth from His grave three days after His death. The man also said that He would destroy Solomon's Temple, which had taken forty-seven years to build, and rebuild it in three days. Other witnesses could be found to testify to these things.

Some considered, however, that these stories were empty exaggerations, and nothing more.

"They are blasphemy," exclaimed Caiaphas. "Everything He says has a hidden meaning. What He meant

was that three days after His death He would rise again, in order to destroy the Kingdom of the Jews and establish a new Kingdom." Then he turned to Jesus: "Did you say that?"

Jesus was silent.

"He does not deny it; he did say it. The wrath of Jehovah which presses heavily on Israel has been evoked by this blasphemer and false prophet. And the guilty creature does not deny it." Then Caiaphas turned to the people who were gathering in increasing numbers in the forecourt: "Let him who knows anything further against Him, come forward and speak."

Then several voices exclaimed: "He is a blasphemer, He is a false prophet, He has brought on us the curse of Jehovah!"

"Do you hear?" said the High Priest. "Those are the voices of the people! Yet in order to satisfy the nicest of consciences, we will permit Him to speak once again that He may defend Himself. Jesus of Nazareth! many know that you have said that you are the Christ, sent by heaven. Answer clearly and without ambiguity. I ask you, are you Christ, the Son of God?"

"You say so," replied Jesus.

Again, and in a louder voice Caiaphas asked: "By all you deem sacred, speak now on oath. Are you the son of God?"

And then Jesus said to the High Priest: "If you do not believe that I stand before you as a poor sinner, you will believe it when I come down from heaven in the clouds at the right hand of Almighty God."

When Jesus had spoken those words, Caiaphas turned

to the assembly: "What do you want more? If that 's not rank blasphemy, I 'll resign my office. Then we have punished others, who said less, far too severely. What shall we do with Him?"

Several priests rent their garments in anger, and shouted: "Let Him die!"

The cry was taken up by many voices right through the streets. The priests immediately set about what was necessary for the sentence to be pronounced that night, and, if possible, carried out before the festival without making a stir.

If the matter had rested with Herod, King of the Jews, he would have rid himself of his rival from Nazareth with a snap of his fingers; but it was the Roman governor who had to be dealt with. So Pontius Pilate was waked also in the night. He was a Roman, and was appointed by the Emperor to hold Judæa in spite of Herod, whose Jewish kingdom had become as nothing. He often said that the office — to rule the Jewish people for the Emperor — had been his evil star. He would rather have remained in cultured Rome, whose gods were much more amiable than the perverse Jehovah, about whom all kinds of sects disputed, and then came this Nazarene. When Pilate learnt the reason why he was disturbed from his sleep, he cursed: "This stupid business again about the Nazarene, who, accompanied by a few beggars rode into Jerusalem on an ass, and said He was the Messiah. The people laughed at Him. And that 's to be made a political case. They should expel Him from the Temple and let people sleep."

But the crowd shouted in front of his windows: "He

is a blasphemer! A deceiver and a traitor! An anarchist! He must be tried!" Pilate did not know what to do. Then his wife came, and entreated him not to do anything to Jesus of Nazareth. She had had a horrible dream about Him. She had seen Him standing in a white garment that shone like the moon. Then He had descended into a deep abyss where the souls of the condemned were wailing, had raised them up and led them on high. Then dreadful angels with big black wings had seized the judges, and thrown them into the abyss. Pilate had been among them, and his cry of pain still rang in her ears.

"Don't make my head more confused than it is already with your talking," he commanded. The noise in the street became more threatening every moment.

Jesus was exhausted, and, surrounded by guards, sat down on a stone in the courtyard of Pilate's house. The crowd came up and mocked at and insulted Him. They draped Him in the torn red cloak of a Bedouin for royal purple, they plucked thorns from a hedge in the neighbouring garden, wove them into a crown, and set it on His head. They broke off a dry reed and gave it Him in His hand for a sceptre. They anointed His cheek with spittle. And then they bowed down to the ground before Him, and sang in a shrill voice: "We salute Thee O anointed Messiah-King!" and put out their tongues at Him.

Jesus sat there, calm and unmoved, and let everything pass. He looked at His tormentors with sad eyes, not in anger, but in pity.

His terrified disciples, His till death, had now come

up, but remained outside the walls. Peter was furious over the infamous betrayal that had taken place, and could not understand what had possessed Judas. In great distress he stood in the farthest courtyard where it was dark. Then a girl tripped up to him who was going to the well for water.

"Here 's another!" she shouted. "Why are you standing here? Go and do homage to your King."

Peter turned in the direction of the door.

"You 're also one of those Galileans," she continued.

"What has Galilee to do with me?" he said.

A doorkeeper interposed: "Of course he is a Galilean. You can see that by his dress. He belongs to the Nazarene."

"I do not know Him," said Peter, and tried to hurry off. The doorkeeper prevented him with the shaft of his spear. "Hold there! Jew! Your King is seated yonder on His throne. Do homage to Him before He flies into the clouds."

"Let me alone; I do not know the man," exclaimed Peter, and hastened away. As he went out of the gate, a cock crowed just over his head. Peter started. Did *He* not speak of a cock at supper? "And another will deny Me this night just before cock crow." Now what he had done became clear to the old disciple. From terror that he too would be seized, he had lied about his Master, about Him who had been everything to them — everything — everything. Now in His need they left Him alone, had not even the courage to acknowledge themselves His supporters. "Oh, Simon!" he said to himself, "you should have stayed by your Lake instead of play-

ing the chosen of God. He gave me His Kingdom of Heaven and I gave Him this!" His life was now so broken that he crept out into the desert. There he threw himself on a stone, wrung his hands, and abandoned himself to weeping.

Jesus was at last brought into the hall to the Governor. When Pilate saw Him in that unheard-of disguise, his temper began to rise. He had not been waked from his sleep for a joke. Well, the Jews had mocked at their Messiah-King to-day, He would mock at them through Him.

He heard the accusation but found nothing in it.

"What?" he said to the High Priests and their supporters, "I 'm to condemn your King? Why, what are you thinking of?" Instead of terrifying the accused with his judicial dignity, he desired to enter into conversation with Him. Although the Nazarene stood there in such wretched plight, He must have something in Him to have roused the masses as He did. He wanted to make His acquaintance. In a friendly manner He put mocking questions to Him. Did He really know anything special of God? Whether He would n't tell him too, for even heathens were sometimes curious about the Kingdom of Heaven. How should a man begin to love a God whom no one had ever seen? Or which among the gods was the true one? And for his life he would like to know what truth really was.

Jesus did not reply one word.

"You do not seem to lack the virtue of pride," continued Pilate, "and that pleases me. You know, of course, in whose presence you stand. In that of him who has the power to kill you or to set you free."

Jesus Before Pilate

YMANNOD ODIT MOA
YRABLI
YRY ACH

Jesus was still silent.

The crowd which already filled the large courtyard became more and more noisy and unmanageable. Rabbis slipped through it in order to fan the fire, and sentence of death was eagerly desired. Pilate shrugged his shoulders. He did not understand the people. But he could not condemn an innocent man to death. He would let the Nazarene just as He was step out on to the balcony. He himself took a torch from a slave's hand to light up the picture of pity. "See," he called down to the crowd, "what a wretched man!"

"To the gallows with Him! To the cross with Him!" shouted the crowd.

"If," said Pilate, preserving his ironical tone, "if you do not want to miss your Passover spectacle, go out there, there 'll sure to be criminals impaled to-day. What do you say to Barabbas, the desert king? O ye men of Jerusalem, be satisfied with *one* king."

"We want to see Jesus impaled," raged the people.

"But why, by Jupiter? I cannot see that He is guilty of anything."

One of the High Priests came up to him.

"If you set this blasphemer, this demagogue, free, who, so He says, intends to redeem the Jewish nation from bondage, who has the devil's eloquence with which to influence the masses, if you let this man go about among the people again, then you are your Emperor's bitterest enemy. Then we shall ask the noble lord for a governor who is as true to Emperor as we are!"

"You will be more imperial than Pontius Pilate!" He threw out that sentence to them, measuring their figures

with contempt. Whenever Rome touched any of their chartered rights, they seethed with anger; but whenever they needed power to accomplish some purpose hostile to the people, they cringed to Rome. They recognized no people and no Emperor; their Temple-law was all in all to them. And they dared to advise the Governor to be imperial! But the crowd murmured angrily. The storm of passion was increasing in the courtyard. A thousand voices threatening, shouting shrilly, demanded the Nazarene's death. At that moment his wife sent to Pilate and reminded him of her dream. He was inclined to set the accused free at once. Then in the dim light of the torches and the dawning day, a dark mass appeared above the heads of the people. It was one of those criminals' stakes with the cross-beam made out at Golgotha, only more massive and imposing. They had dragged the cross here, and when it became visible to the crowd, in increased rage they broke out: "Crucify Him! Crucify Him! Jesus or Pilate!"

Jesus — or Pilate; does he hear?

"Jesus or Pilate?" was re-echoed from courtyard to courtyard, from street to street.

"Do you hear, Governor?" one of the High Priests asked him. "There is nothing to be done! You see, people have n't been asleep to-night. They are mad!" So saying he seized the staff of justice, and offered it to Pilate. He had turned pale at the sight of the raging mob. He signed to the poor man that he wished to speak to him. The tumult subsided sufficiently for his words to be heard, and he shouted hoarsely:

"I cannot find that this man has committed any

crime. But you wish to crucify Him. So be it, but His death is on your consciences!" Purposely, following the Jewish custom, he washed his hands in a bowl, so that those who could not hear him could see, and holding them up, all dripping wet, before the people: "My hands are clean from His blood. I accept no responsibility." He seized the staff, broke it in two with his hands, and threw the pieces at Jesus's feet.

Then there arose a storm of jubilation: "Hail to thee, Pilate! Hail to the Governor of the great Emperor! Hail to the great Governor of the Emperor!"

The High Priests humbly bowed before him, and the guards seized the condemned man.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

The big cross, carried by insolent youths, swung to and fro over the heads of the people. Every one tried to get out of the way of the sinister thing; if a man, joking, thrust his neighbour towards it, he pushed quickly back into the crowd with a shriek. And the unceasing cry went on: "Hail to Pontius Pilate! To the cross with the Nazarene!"

Jesus was led from the hall into the courtyard, and His guards had to protect Him from the fury of the mob. They took Him up to the cross.

A sentry appeared, and, violently swinging his arm, shouted: "No execution can take place here! Away with Him! No execution can be permitted here!"

"To Golgotha!"

When the youths found that they would have to take the cross back whence they had fetched it, they let it fall to the ground, so that the wood made a groaning noise, and ran off.

"Let Him carry His own cross!" shouted several voices. The plan commended itself to the guards; they unbound His hands, and placed the cross on His shoulder. He staggered under the load. They beat Him with cords like a beast of burden; He tottered along with

trembling steps, carrying the cross on His right shoulder, so that one arm of the wood fell against His breast, held fast with His hands. The long stake was dragged along the ground. They had tied a cord round His waist by which they led Him. They pulled Him along so violently that He stumbled, and often fell. The crowd following tried to do everything that they thought might hurt Him. So Jesus tottered along, bowed under the heavy weight of the wood, His gown covered with street mud, His head pierced by the thorns so that drops of blood trickled down His unkempt hair and over His agonized face. Never before was so wretched a figure dragged to the place of execution, never before was a poor sinner so terribly ill-treated on his way to death. And never before had such dignity and gentleness been seen in the countenance of a condemned man as in that of this man. Some women who had got up early out of curiosity to see the procession stood crowded together at the street corner. But when they saw it their mood changed, and they broke out into loud lamentation over the unheard-of horror. Jesus raised His trembling hand towards them, as if He wished to say to them: "While your husbands murder Me, you are deep in lamentation. Do not lament for Me, lament for yourselves and for your children, who will have to suffer for the sins of their fathers!" One of the women, heedless of the raging mob, tore the white kerchief from her head, and bent down to Him who was carrying the cross in order to wipe the blood and perspiration from His face. When she got back to her house and was about to wash the cloth, she saw on it — the face of the Prophet. And it

seemed as if kindness and gratitude for her service of love looked out from its features at her. The women all came running up to see the miracle, and to haggle to get the cloth with such a picture for themselves. But its possessor locked it up in her room.

When Jesus fell beneath the cross for the third time, He was unable to get up again. The guards tugged and pulled Him; the Roman soldiers who accompanied them were too proud to carry the cross for this wretched Jew. So the crowd was invited to direct some one to pick up the poor sinner and drag the cross along. The only answer was scornful laughter. A hard-featured cobbler rushed out of a neighbouring house, and, almost foaming at the mouth with rage, desired that the creature should be removed from before his door. "Customers would be kept off!"

"Let Him rest here a moment," said one of the soldiers, pointing to the fallen man, whose breast heaved in short, violent spasms.

Then the cobbler swung a leathern strap and struck the exhausted man. He pulled Himself together in order to totter a few steps farther. An old man, very old, and forsaken, stood by. He had come from the desert where great thoughts dwell. He had come to see if Jerusalem was ascending upwards or descending downwards. He desired its descent, for he longed for rest. The old man stood in front of the cobbler and said to him softly: "Grandson of Uriah! You refuse a brief rest to this poorest of poor creatures? You yourself will be everlastingly restless. You will experience all the misery of humanity and never be able to rest. The

curse of your people will be fulfilled in you — heartless Jew!"

At that selfsame hour, Simeon, the citizen, was sitting alone in his house thinking over his fate, and he was sad. Since the ride into the wilderness, from which he had returned beaten and robbed, he had, following the word of the Prophet from whom he had sought happiness, changed much in regard to himself and his way of life. Impossible as it had then seemed, much had become possible. He had emancipated his slaves, broken up his harem, given the overflow of his possessions to the needy, and dispensed with all show. And yet he was not happy — his heart was bare and empty. He was pondering the matter when the shouting of the crowd reached him from the street. What was happening so early? He looked down, saw the spears of the soldiers glitter above the people's heads, and how one of the poor sinners who was to be executed that day was being led out. Simeon was turning away from the disagreeable sight when he saw that the man was carrying the cross Himself, and how, ill-treated by the guards, He became weaker every moment, so that the cross struck noisily against the stones. In a flash he understood. Without stopping to think, he hurried into the street, and pushed his way to the tortured creature in order to help Him. And when he looked into the poor man's worn face, down which a tear ran, he was so overcome with pity that he placed himself under the cross, took it on his shoulder, and carried it along. The crowd howled; insults and mud were thrown at Simeon. He paid no heed, he scarcely observed it. He was wrapt in

what he was doing; he only thought of his desire to help the unhappy creature who staggered along beside him to bear His load. A wondrous feeling was in him, an eager gladness that he had never before known. All the joy of his life was not to be compared with this bliss; he would have liked to go on for ever and ever by the side of this man, and help Him to bear His load and to love Him.

Is it that? Is that what is called life? To be where Love is? To do what Love directs?

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

FEAR increased in the quiet house at Nazareth. Mary determined to go to Jerusalem for the holy festival to offer her sorrow as a sacrifice to God, to implore Him to enlighten her erring son, and to restore to Him the faith of His ancestors. As she journeyed through Samaria and Judæa she thought of the days long past, when she had travelled that way to Bethlehem with her faithful Joseph, and the inconceivable things that had happened then.

They reached the valley where the earth is grey and dry. It was the place in which Adam and Eve had settled when they were driven out of Paradise. She thought of the erring descendants of our first parents, and with her mind's eye saw a dear little descendant of Adam, who was perfectly innocent, and who must yet bear all the misery of the earth with the guilty. The boy stood sadly by the hedge, and peeped into the Lost Paradise. A white-robed angel stood by the Tree of Knowledge; he saw the child and was sorry. He broke off a branch from the tree, handed it out to the boy, and said: "Here is something from Paradise. Plant the bough in the ground. It will take root and grow, and produce fresh seeds until the throne of the Messiah may be

built of its trunk." "O, God! where is the trunk, and where is the Messiah's throne?" sighed Mary, and went away.

When after her tiring journey she reached the town in the morning, she found the people streaming along the roads and streets in one direction. She asked the innkeeper what was happening. He replied by asking her if she did not also wish to go and see the execution.

"God forbid!" answered Mary; "happy are all who are not obliged to go."

"Look, there they come!" exclaimed the innkeeper in glad surprise. "They 'll come past here. I really believe it's the Messiah-King! Oh, I could have let out the windows for a silver piece each!"

The woman from Galilee wished to go back into the house, but she was pushed away and carried with the crowd into the narrow street, where suddenly she stood before him. Before Jesus, her son! When He saw His mother His little remaining strength nearly forsook Him, but He managed to keep standing. He turned to her with a look of unspeakable sadness and love, a brief look in which lay all that a child could have to say to his mother in such a meeting. Then they pushed Him on with blows and curses.

Mary stood as if turned to stone. Her eyes were tearless, her head confused, her heart scarcely beat. "That is what God has prepared for me!" That was all she could think, and, unwilling and bewildered, she was carried along by the crowd. Everything seemed sunk in a blue darkness, yet stars danced before her eyes.

At length the procession emerged through the vaulted double gateway into the open. A dim, pale light lay over

the barren district. The rocky hill stood out clear on the right. A great stir was there. Busy workmen were digging deep holes on the top, others were preparing stakes for the desert robbers. Those wild creatures were already half naked, and the executioners were slinging cords round them to bind them to the wooden frame. They are the lean, brown Barabbas, and the pale, sunken-eyed Dismas. The former gazed around him with his hawk's eyes, clenched his hands, and tried to burst his fetters. The other was quite broken down, and his unkempt hair hung about him. The disciples had come as far as the tower of the town walls, but had withdrawn in terror, all but John, James, and Peter. For Peter had decided to acknowledge himself a follower of Jesus of Nazareth, should it cost him his life. But no one troubled any further about the strangers. The disciples had seen Judas slinking behind the rocky mounds; he looked frightfully upset, an image of despair. So, although they had been beyond all measure furious against the traitor, that wretched-looking creature softened their anger; they regarded him only as a thing of horror.

Simeon carried the cross to the top. And when he laid it down and looked once again into the face of the poor sinner who had staggered up beside him, he recognized the Prophet. He recognized the man with whom he had spoken in the desert concerning eternal life. He had then paid scant attention to His words, but he had forgotten none of them. Now he began to understand that whoever lived according to the teaching of this man must attain inward happiness. And was it on account of that teaching that the man was to be executed?

The captain ordered Simeon to move away. Two executioners laid hands on Jesus to undress Him. He sent one swift glance to heaven, then closed His eyes, and calmly let them proceed. The guards seized His gown, fought for it, and because they could not agree who had won it they diced for it. Then they accused each other of cheating, and fought afresh. Up came Schobal, the dealer in old clothes, and pointed out with a grin that it was not worth while to crack their skulls over a poor sinner's old coat. The gown was torn and bloody; it was not worth a cent; but in order to end a dispute between his brave countrymen he would offer four cents, which they could divide in peace among them. The coat was delivered over to Schobal. He went up and down in the crowd with the garment. It was the coat of the Prophet who was being executed! Who wanted a souvenir that day? The coat would not cost the half of its value; it might be bought for twelve cents!

A man brought long iron nails in a basket. The Nazarene was not to be tied, but nailed, because He had once said that He should descend from the cross. When they noticed that Jesus was nearly swooning, they offered him a refreshing drink of vinegar and myrrh. He refused it with thanks, and when He began to sink down the executioners caught Him and laid Him on the cross.

The crowd suddenly drew back. Many did not want to see what was going on. They were dumb. They had imagined it would be quite different. The gentleness with which He bore it all, the torture, the scorn, death before His eyes, His heroic calm weighed like a mountain on

their hard hearts. Those who had formerly despised Him now wanted to hate Him, but they could not. They were powerless before this overwhelming gentleness. What a sound! That of a hammer beating on iron! "How the blood spirts?" whispered some one. Two hammers hit the nails, and at each blow heaven and earth trembled. The crowd held its breath, and not a sound was heard from the town. Nothing but the ringing of the hammer. Then suddenly a heartrending cry was heard in the crowd. It came from a strange woman who had pushed through it and sank to the ground. The mass of people drew away more and more, no one would stand in front, yet each stretched his neck so as to see over the others' heads. They saw the stake lifted up and then sink again. The captain's orders could be heard plainly and clearly, then it stood up straight. At first the long stake was seen above their heads; it bore a white placard. Then the cross-beams appeared on which trembling human arms were seen, then the head moving in violent pain. And so the cross with the naked human body rose in the air. Slowly it rose, supported by poles, and as soon as it stood straight, the foot of the cross was set so roughly in its hole, that the body shook with a dull groan. The wounds made by the nails in the hands and feet were wide, the blood ran in dark streams over the white body, down the stake, and dropped on the ground. And there was heard from the mouth of the man on the cross, the loud cry. "O, Father, pardon them, pardon them! They know not what they do."

A strange murmur arose in the crowd, and those who had not understood the cry asked their neighbours to

repeat it. "He asks pardon for His enemies? For His enemies? He prays for His enemies?"

"Then — then He cannot be a human being!"

"He forgives those who despised, slandered, scorned, beat, crucified Him? When dying He thinks of His enemies and pardons them? Then it is as He said. He is indeed the Christ! I thought at once He was the Christ. I said so only last Sabbath!" The voices grew louder. Schobal, the old clothes dealer, pushed about in the crowd and offered the Messiah's coat for twenty cents.

"If He is the Messiah," shouted a Rabbi hoarsely, "let Him free Himself. He who wants to help others and cannot help Himself is a poor sort of Messiah."

"Now, Master," exclaimed a Pharisee, "if you would rebuild the shattered Temple, now 's the time. Come down from the cross, and we 'll believe in you." The man on the cross looked at the two mockers in deep sadness, and they became silent. Suddenly a passage in the Scriptures flammed before them: "He must bleed for your crimes!"

When they had all drawn back from the cross, and the executioners were preparing to raise up the two desert robbers, the woman who had swooned, supported by the disciple John, tottered up to the tall cross and put her arms around its trunk so that the blood ran down upon her. Her pain was as boundlessly great as if seven swords had pierced her heart. Jesus looked down, and how veiled was the voice in which He said: "John, take care of the mother! Mother, see, John, your son!"

A murmur arose in the crowd: "His mother? Is that His mother? Oh, poor woman! And the handsome young

man His brother? The poor creatures! Look, how He turns to them as if He would comfort them."

Many a man passed his hand over his eyes, and the women sobbed. And a dull lamentation began to go through the people — the same people who had so angrily demanded His death. And they talked together.

"He can't suffer much longer."

"No, I've had some experience. I've been here every Passover. But this time — "

"If I only knew what is written on the tablet."

"Over His head? My sight seems to have gone."

"Inri!" exclaimed somebody.

"Inri! Somebody calls out 'Inri.'"

"Those are the letters on the tablet."

"But the man's name 's not Inri."

"Something else, my friend. That is Pilate's joke. *Jesus Nazarenus Rex Judæorum.*

"Don't talk to me in that accursed Latin tongue."

"In good Hebrew: Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews."

"Friends, that has quite a different meaning."

"Now, they 've got Him in the middle," said another, for the two robbers had been hoisted up to the right and left of Him. The one on the left stretched out his neck, and mocked at Jesus with a distorted face: "I think, neighbour, that you are one of those who get executed because they are the weaker. Jump off the cross, rush among them, and the wretches will idolize you!"

Jesus did not answer him. He turned His head towards the man who hung on His right. He saw the moment approach when his legs would be broken. In the

agony of death, and in repentance for his ill-spent life. he turned to Him whom they called Messiah and Christ. And when he saw the expression with which Jesus looked at him, a curious shudder passed through the criminal's heart. How the man on the cross gazed at him, with His fading eyes — O God! — it was the never-to-be-forgotten holy look which a little child had given him in the days of his youth. Dismas began to weep, and said: "Lord, you are from heaven! When you return home, remember me."

And Jesus said to him: "There is mercy for all who repent! To-day, Dismas, you will see the heavenly Father with Me.'

"He is from heaven!" was heard in the crowd. "He is from heaven!" One of the Roman soldiers threw his spear away, and exclaimed in immense excitement: "In all truth, He is the Son of God!"

"The Son of God! The Son of God! Set Him free! It is the Son of God who hangs on the cross!" The cry rolled through the crowd like the dull noise of an avalanche; like a shriek of terror, like the inward consciousness of a horrible mistake, the most horrible that had been made since the existence of the world. He who hangs yonder on the cross is the Son of God. Far below in a cleft of the rock is a poor sinner. He stumbles up from the ground by the help of his lean fingers, he looks up to the cross with wavering eyes. A prayer for mercy wells up from his heart like a bloody spring. And beside him a woman kneels and folds her hands against the cross. And the women who stands under the cross wrings her hands, and implores mercy for her child.

The letters I.N.R.I. over the cross begin to shine. And a voice is heard in the air: "I.N.R.I. Jesus's Neighbourhood Rescues Ill-doers."

"The Son of God! The Son of God!" The cry went on without cessation. "The Son of God on the cross!"

"The Son of God's coat! A hundred gold pieces for the coat!" shrieked old Schobal, lifting the garment up on a stick like a flag. The dealer swore by that flag, for its value had risen a thousandfold in an hour. "A hundred gold pieces for the Son of God's coat!" But it was high time that the dealer made himself scarce, for the people of Jerusalem were angry with the man who wanted to do business in sight of the dying Saviour. The good, pious men of Jerusalem!

Not a High Priest was to be seen. They had all gone away. The hoarse-voiced Rabbi was still there, and he recited Psalms aloud like an exhortation to the dying man.

"Hold your jaw!" some one shouted at him. "You killed Him."

"You? Whom do you mean?" asked the Rabbi with well-feigned ignorance.

"Why you, you expounders of the Scriptures, you brought Him to death, and no one else than you!"

The Rabbi replied very seriously: "Consider, my friend, what you say, if you can answer for your accusation before the dread Jehovah. We expounders of the Law brought Him to His death! Every one knows who condemned Him. Foreigners, who have ever been the destroyers of our people. Every one knows who crucified Him at the desire of the people."

It was urgent that he should defend himself. The voices grew ever louder: people and judges were goaded to it by the High Priests! They are guilty —

"Silence! He still lives!"

All looks were centred on the cross.

Jesus turned His head to the crowd and muttered in His weakness: "I am thirsty! I am thirsty!"

The captain ordered a sponge to be dipped in vinegar, and reached up to Him on a stick so that the dying man might imbibe the moisture.

A young woman with her hair flowing loose lay on the rocks. She kneeled, and, supporting her elbows on the ground, whimpered softly: "O Saviour, Saviour! The sins!"

He looked once again at His dear ones. Then He lifted His head quickly and uttered a cry to Heaven: "Father, receive my soul! My Father! Do not forsake Me!" He looked upwards, gazed at the heavens with wide-opened eyes, then His head dropped and fell on His breast.

John sank to the ground, covering his face with his hands. It was over!

. . . . .

The crowd was almost motionless. They stood and stared, and their faces were white. The town walls were dun-coloured, the shrubs were grey, the young buds were pale and closed.

A lustreless sun stood in the sky like a moon, and its shadows were ghostly. Terrified rooks and bats flew around, and hovered about the cross in this horrible twilight. Rocks on the hills broke away, and skulls rolled down the slope. And men were as if they had lost the

The Crucifixion

WARNER GRAY
LIBRARY

power of speech, they stood dumb and looked at one another.

"Now something has happened," said an old man to himself.

Straightway the crowd began to move, uncertainly at first, then with more animation and noise.

"What has happened?" asked a bystander.

"Oh, my friend! What has happened now has thrown the world off its balance. I do not know what it is, but it has thrown the world off its balance. If it is not the end of the world, then it must be its beginning."

"Inri! Inri!" shouted the voice of a shuddering lunatic.

Then there was a general shout. "What is it? It is dark! In all my life I 've never been so frightened as I am now."

"Do you see the cross, how it 's growing bigger. Higher, ever higher, higher! I can't look up. It 's a giant cross!"

Then came news. "A pillar has fallen in the Temple. The curtain of the Holy of Holies has been rent in twain. Outside, in the cemetery, the tombs have opened and the dead wrapped in their white shrouds have risen from them."

"The end of the world!"

"The beginning of the world!"

"Jesus Christ!"

. . . . .

"Jesus Christ!" rustles through the crowd like the spring breezes over the desert. The words sound through the whole of Jerusalem, they sound throughout the

broad land of Judæa, the all-powerful words. They kindle a fire which has lighted up the universe until the present day.

His dear and faithful ones assembled at the cross where the dead Master hung. There are more of them than there were yesterday, among them even some who had shouted in the night: "Crucify Him!" The disciples stood up, silent, making no lamentation. Mary, the mother, stood by John's side, and Magdalen by him. A marvellous peacefulness of heart had come to them, so that they asked themselves: "How is it possible? Is not our Jesus dead?"

"Oh, brothers," said Peter, "it is to me as if He lives."

"He in us, and we in Him," said John.

Only Bartholomew was restless. Hesitatingly he asked James if he had not also understood Him to say: "Father, do not forsake Me." James was thinking of another word, and of another of the brothers. He went away from the cross to seek out Judas. He would tell him that in dying the Master had forgiven His enemies, he would share with him the Saviour's legacy: Mercy for sinners!

Since the early hours of the morning when the Master had been condemned to death in the Governor's house, Judas had wandered aimlessly about. He tried to surrender himself to the captain as a false witness and a spy, as one who sold men for gold. He was laughed at and left alone. Then he went to one of the High Priests to swear that his statements had not been so meant; that his Master was no evil-doer, but rather the Messenger of

God, who would destroy His enemies. He had not intended to betray Him, and he would return the traitor's pay to the Pharisee. He shrugged his shoulders, said that was no concern of his; he had given no money, would receive none. Then Judas threw the silver pieces at his feet and hurried away. His long hair waved in the wind. He slunk along behind the town walls in order to get in advance of the procession and let himself be impaled at Golgotha instead of the Master. But he was too late; he heard the strokes of the hammer. He went down into the Valley of Kedron. Not a soul was to be seen there, every one had gone to the place of execution. Judas was thrust out, even by the gaping crowd, abandoned as a traitor. Frightful, inconceivable, was the thing he had done! Alas! why had He not revealed Himself? He stood patiently, gentle as a lamb before the judges, and bore the cross as no one had ever done before. And in the end was it so? Not to strive against one's enemies, to suffer one's fate as the will of God, to lay down one's life for the tidings of the Father — was that glory the mission of the Messiah? "And I? I saw something else in Him. And made a mistake, greater than all the mistakes of all the fools put together. And now I am thrust out of the community of righteous men, and thrust out of the community of sinners. There is pardon for the undisciplined, the murderer, but not for the traitor. He Himself said: Better that such a man had never been born. Others dare to atone for their sins in caves of the desert, dare to expiate their crimes with their blood — but I am cast out of all Love and all expiation for ever and ever." Such were the endless laments of

Judas. He wandered to and fro behind walls and among bushes; he hid himself in caves the whole day. Then suddenly it flashed on him: "It is unjust. I believed in Him. I believed in Him implicitly. Is such trust cast aside? Can the Divine Man cast away such a trust? No, it is not so, it is not so!"

His fate was decided by this shattering of his last support. When it was dark he slunk past a farm. Ropes hung over the walls; he pulled one off and hurried to the mountain. The sun was setting behind Jerusalem, over the heights, like a big, red, lustreless pane of glass. Once more for the last time his eye sought the light, the departing light. And a cross stood out large and dark against the red circle; the tall cross at Golgotha right in the centre of the gloomy sun. Gigantic and dark it stood against the dark red background — horrible! The despairing heart of Judas could not endure it. With a savage curse he went up to a fig-tree. James was behind it. He had seen Judas climb the slope, had waved his cloak to sign to him: "It is I, James. Brother, I come from the Master. Listen, brother, mercy for sinners. Mercy for all who repent. Listen." Almost breathless he reached the fig-tree. Arms and legs hung down lifeless, the mouth drawn in, the tongue protruding from the lips. The body swung to and fro in the evening breeze. The wretched man had not waited for the Saviour's pardon.

Towards the end of that same day the old man of the East, who came from the desert where great thoughts dwell, the weary old man who called down twice the curse of everlasting unrest on the grandson of Uriah, went to a stonecutter in Jerusalem. He thought it time to

order his tombstone. And on it were to be cut the letters "I.N.R.I."

"Did you also belong to the Nazarene?" asked the stonecutter.

"Why do you ask that?"

"Because it is the inscription on His cross."

"It is the inscription on my grave," said the old man, and it means:

"'In Nirwana Rest I.'"

CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

WHEN all was over, Joseph of Arimathea, a blunt, outspoken disciple of Jesus, went to Pilate, the Governor, to ask him that the Prophet's body might be buried that same evening.

"Have His legs been broken?" Pilate inquired of him.

"Sir, that is not necessary. He is dead."

"I do not trust you."

"It is quite right, sir. The captain pierced his side. Not a drop of blood."

"I have been warned about you," said Pilate roughly. "I shall send a guard to watch the grave."

"As your lordship pleases."

"The man said that He would rise from the dead on the third day. It is likely that His friends will help Him."

Joseph stood up straight in front of the Governor and said: "Sir, how do you justify such a suspicion? Have we Jews been absolutely untrustworthy in our fatherland? Not sufficiently so that this best of all men, this divine man, should have been condemned to death without a shadow of reason, and His followers, too, despised as if they were cheats and body-snatchers."

"You have to thank your priests for that," said Pilate, with cold indifference.

"We know the caste," replied Joseph, "and so do you. But you are afraid of it. Our Master would have made an end of it. But you are a broken reed. Many of our great men have been ruined by Roman arrogance. Roman *cowardice* destroyed our Master's life."

The Governor started, but remained cold. He signed with his hand: "Let me hear no more of this story. Do what you like with Him. Sentries can be placed at the grave, and I 've had more than enough of the Jews to-day."

Thus Arimathea was dismissed. Ungraciously, it is true, but with permission to bury the beloved corpse.

Meanwhile the torment of the two desert robbers was ended. And Dismas was set free from Barabbas, to whom a demoniacal fate had chained him his whole life long. Jesus had come between them, and had divided the penitent from the impenitent man. It is true that their bodies were thrown into the same grave, but the soul of Dismas would find the appointed trysting-place.

As soon as Arimathea returned from his interview with the Governor, late as the hour was, Jesus was unfastened from the cross and let down to the ground with cloths. Then the body was anointed with precious oil, wrapped in white linen, and carried to Joseph's garden. They placed it in the grave in the stillness of the night.

A holy peace pervaded the earth, and the stars shone in the heavens like lamps at the repose of the Lord.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

In the night which followed this saddest of all sad days, Mary, the mother, could not sleep. And yet she saw a face such as could not have been seen by any one awake.

Crouching down, leaning against the stone, her eyes resting on the cross that rose tall and straight into the sky, it was a tree covered with red and white blossoms. It was as if the branch of the Tree of Paradise which the angel had once reached over the hedge, had bloomed. It stood in the midst of a beautiful rose-garden filled with pleasant odours, running water, and songs of birds, with a wonderful light over everything. Innumerable companies of men and women came into that Eden from out a deep abyss. They ascended slowly and solemnly out of the gloomy depths to the bright heights. Quite in front came a couple, our first father, Adam, arm-in-arm with Eve. Just behind them Abel, arm-in-arm with Cain. Then crowded up the patriarchs, the judges, the kings, the prophets, and the psalmists, among them Abraham and Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, Solomon and David, Zachariah and Josiah, Eleazar and Jehoiakim, and quite at the back — an old man, walking alone, supporting himself on a stick

from which lilies sprouted — Joseph, her husband. He was in no hurry; he stopped and looked round at Mary.

They went into Paradise.

That was what Mary saw, and then day dawned.

CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

In accordance with the orders, the Nazarene's grave was strictly guarded. A heavy stone had been placed in the opening of the niche in the rocks within which the body was laid, and, at the Governor's wish, the captain had sealed it at every end and corner. Two fully-armed soldiers were stationed at the entrance with the command to keep off every suspicious person from the grave. And then, on the third day after the entombment, an incredible rumour went about in Jerusalem. *The Nazarene had risen!*

On the morning of that day, so it was said, two women went to the grave, the mother of the dead man, and Magdalen, His devoted follower. They were surprised to find that the guards were not there, and then they saw that the stone had been rolled away. The niche in the rock was empty; only the white linen in which He had been wrapped was there. It lay at the edge of the grave, its ends hanging down. The women began to weep, thinking some one had taken the corpse from them; then they saw a white-robed boy standing by, and heard him say: "He whom you seek is not here. He lives, and goes with you to Galilee."

As if in some extraordinary dream, the women stag-

gered back from the grave. There was a man in the garden whom at first they took to be the gardener. They wanted to question Him; He came towards them. With youthful, beautiful, shining countenance, immaculate, without wounds except the nail-marks on the hands. He stood before them. They were terror-stricken. They heard Him say: "Peace be with you! It is I." As the sun was so bright the women held their hands before their eyes, and when they looked up again, He was no longer to be seen.

The Nazarene's grave was empty! Everybody made a pilgrimage from the town to see. The people's mood had entirely changed since the crucifixion. Not another contemptuous word was heard, some even secretly beat their breasts. The High Priests met together, and inquired of the guards what had occurred. They could tell nothing.

"At least confess that you fell asleep and that His disciples stole Him."

"Honoured sirs," answered one of the guards, "we cannot say twice that we fell asleep; first, because it is n't true, and secondly, because we should be punished."

Upon which one of the expounders of the Law observed: "But in spite of that, you can very well say so. For you have slept once in your lives. And with respect to the punishment, we 'll make it right with the Governor that nothing shall happen to you."

The brave Romans thought it best not to quarrel with the authorities, and to say what they preferred to hear. So the guards had fallen asleep, and meanwhile the

body had been removed by the disciples so as to be able to say, "He is risen." That was made known, and no one thought any more of the resurrection of the Nazarene.

The disciples themselves could not believe it. Some of them declared that Pilate and his spies best knew what had become of the corpse. Others, on the contrary, were filled as never before with visions of a creative power which the pictures of the last days placed before their eyes with tormenting clearness.

It happened that two of the disciples walked out towards Emmaus. They were sad, and spoke of the incomprehensible misfortune that had befallen them. A stranger joined them, and asked why they were so sad.

"We belong to His followers," they replied.

As He said nothing, as if He had not understood, they asked whether He was quite a stranger in Jerusalem, and did not know what had happened these last days.

"What has occurred?" He asked.

He must surely have heard of Jesus, the Prophet, who had done such great deeds, and preached a new and wonderful Word of God: "Of the heavenly Father full of love, of the Kingdom of Heaven in one's own heart, and of eternal life. It was as if God Himself had assumed human shape in the person of this Prophet in order to set them an example of perfect life. And that divine man had just been executed in Jerusalem." Since that they felt infinitely forsaken, and were therefore sad. He had, indeed, promised that He would rise after death as a pledge for His tidings of the resurrection of man and eternal life. A story was going about that two women

had seen Him that morning with the wounds made by the nails. But until they could themselves lay their hands on those wounds, it was not to be believed, and it must be with Him as with all dead people.

Then the stranger said: "If the risen man does not appear to you as he appeared to the women, it is because your faith is too weak. If you do not believe in Him, you surely know from the prophecies how God's messenger must suffer and die, because only through that gate can eternal glory be reached."

With such conversation they reached Emmaus, where the two disciples were to visit a friend. The stranger, they imagined, was going farther, but they liked Him, and so invited Him to go to the house with them: "Sir, stay with us; the day draws in, it will soon be evening."

So He went in with them. When they sat at supper, and the stranger took some bread, one whispered to the other: "Look how He breaks the bread! Is it not our Jesus?"

And when in unspeakable joy they went to embrace Him, they saw that they were alone.

This is what the two disciples related, and no one was more glad to believe it than Schobal the dealer; he now asked three hundred gold pieces for the coat of the man risen from the dead.

Thomas was less sure of the Resurrection. "Why," asked the disciple, "did He come on account of bodily life? Did He not relate everything to the spiritual life? So the true Jesus Christ would be with us in spirit."

The disciples who had accompanied the Master from Galilee went back to their own land filled with that be-

lief. Things had somewhat changed there. The condemnation of the Nazarene without finding Him guilty of anything had vastly angered the Galileans. His glorious death had terrified them. No, this countryman of theirs was no ordinary man! They would now make good to His disciples their ill-conduct towards Him. So His adherents were well received in Galilee, and resumed the occupations that they had abandoned two years before. John had brought the mother home, and gone with her to the quiet house at Nazareth. The others tried to accustom themselves to the work-a-day world, but they could do nothing but think of the Master, and wherever two or three of them were gathered together, He was with them in spirit. One day they were together in a cottage by the lake. They spoke of His being the Son of God, and some who had looked into the Scriptures brought forward proofs: the prophecies which had come to pass in Him, the psalms He had fulfilled, the miracles He had worked, and that many had seen Him after His death.

Suddenly Thomas said: "I don't much hold with all that. Other things have been prophesied, the Prophets, too, worked miracles, and rose after death. What good is it to me if He is not with us in the body?"

They were much alarmed. They shook with terror. Not on account of the Master, but of the brother. But Thomas continued: "Why don't you name the greatest signs, the true signs of His divinity? Why don't you speak of His Word? Of His being the Son of God, of loving your enemy, of salvation? Listen to me. I tell you what we have all experienced, and still experience every

hour. He freed us from worldly desires, He taught us love and joy, He assured us of eternal life with the heavenly Father. He did that through His *Word*. He died for that Word and will live in that Word. To me my brothers, that Divine Word is proof of His being the Son of God. I need no other."

"Children!" said John. He was indeed the youngest of them but he said, "Children! Do not talk in such a way. Faith is the knowledge of the heart. Are we not happy in our hearts that we found the Father so near us, so true to us, so eternally for us, that nothing more can happen for us ? These bodies of ours will perish, but He is the resurrection, and he who believes in Him never dies. He loved the children of men so dearly that He gave them His own Son, so that every one who believe in Him may live for ever. Therefore we are happy, because we are in God, and God is in us."

Thus His favourite disciple spoke in wondrous enthusiasm. They began to understand, and to see the immeasurable significance of the human form that had lived among them.

Wherever they went, whatever they did, His word sounded in their ears. The promise that He would follow them to Galilee was fulfilled, His spirit was with them, they were quite sure of that. But that spirit would not let them rest content with work-a-day life; it was like yeast fermenting in their being, it was like a spark kindled into a bright flame, and the fiery tongues announced the glad tidings. They must go forth. None dared be the first to say so, but all at once they all said: "We must go forth into the wide world." With no great

preparation, with cloak and staff as they had travelled with Him, they went forth. First to Jerusalem, to stand once more by His grave, and then forth in every direction to preach about Jesus, the Son of God.

And so I am come to the end of my vision. I will only tell further of the meeting which was so remarkable and so fraught with consequences. One day when the disciples during their journey to Jerusalem were resting under the almond-trees, they saw a troop of horsemen in the valley. They were native soldiers with a captain. He seemed to have noticed the disciples, for he put spurs to his horse. The disciples were a little terrified, and Thaddeus, who had good eyes, said: "God be merciful to us, that 's the cruel weaver!"

"We will calmly wait for him," said the brothers, and they remained standing. When the rider was quite close to them, he quickly dismounted and asked: "Are you belonging to Jesus of Nazareth?"

"We are His disciples," they answered frankly.

Then he kneeled before Peter, the eldest, spread his arms, and exclaimed: "Receive me, receive me; I will become worthy to be His disciple."

"But if I do not mistake, you are Saul who lay traps for Him?" said Peter.

"Set traps, persecuted Him and His," said the horseman, and his words came quickly from his lips. "Two days ago I rode out against those who said He had risen. I was always thinking of the man who saw so strangely into men's minds. I thought of Him day and night, and of much that He had said. And as I was riding across the plain in the twilight, a light enveloped me, my horse

stumbled, a white figure stood in front of me, and in the hand lifted towards heaven was the mark of a wound. 'Who are you that bar my way?' I exclaimed. And He answered, 'I am He whom you persecuted!' It was your Master risen from the dead. 'Why did you persecute me, Saul? What had I done to you?' Your Jesus, the Christ, stood living before me! Yes, men of Galilee, now I believe that He is risen. And as, hitherto, I denied His word, I will now help to spread it abroad. Brothers! receive me!"

That is my picture of the conversion of Saul to an apostle. He sent his horse back to the valley, and went with the Galileans to Jerusalem in gladness and humility.

When, after some days, they reached the Mount of Olives, whence they had first looked on the metropolis, they saw standing on the rocks — Jesus. There He stood, just as He had always been, and the disciples felt exactly as they had when He was with them. They stood round Him in a circle, and He looked at them in kindly fashion. And suddenly they heard Him ask, in a low voice: "Do you love Me?"

"Lord," they answered, "we love you."

He asked again: "Do you love Me?"

They said: "Lord, you know that we love you."

Then He asked for a third time: "Do you love Me?"

And they exclaimed all together: "We cannot express in words, O Lord, how much we love you!"

"Then go forth. Go to the poor, and comfort them; to the sinners, and raise them up. Go to all races, and teach them all that I have told you. Those who believe in Me

will be happy. I am the way, the truth, and the life. I go now to My Father. My spirit and My strength I leave to you: light to the eyes, the word to the tongue, love to the heart. And mercy to sinners — "

Thus they heard Him speak, and — then there was no one there except the disciples. Two footmarks were impressed on the stone. Silence pervaded the heavens; they bowed their faces, and watched how He ascended to the clouds, how He hovered in the light, how He went to the Father, to whom also we shall go through our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE

My Father and my God! I thank Thee that Thou hast permitted me to behold the Life, the Passion, and the Resurrection of Thy Son, and to steep myself in His words and promises during this terrible time. In the torture of suspense, which is more dreadful than death, I have acquired courage from the great events of His life, and received consolation from the appearance of my Redeemer. My hope was strengthened by the holy penitents. For the sake of the crucified Saviour, O Lord, put mercy into my King's heart. If it is God's will that I die, then let me die like Dismas. Only pardon. In the name of Jesus, I implore Thee, O Father, for mercy! Mercy for sinners. Amen.

CONCLUSION

THAT is the story. It was written by a common workman awaiting sentence of death in a prison cell. The last prayer was written exactly six weeks after his condemnation.

Konrad began to feel a little frightened. He had been so absorbed in his Saviour's story that he felt himself to be almost part of it. He had written it all day, and dreamed of it all night. He had been in the stable at Bethlehem, he had wandered by the Lake of Gennesaret, and spent nights in the wilderness of Judæa. He had journeyed to Sidon, and across the mountains to Jerusalem. He had stood on the Mount of Olives, he had been in Bethany and supped at Jesus's side. Captive here in prison, and sentenced to death! At that moment he felt almost indifferent to the thought. Had he not experienced that glorious death at Golgotha? All else sank into insignificance beside that. It almost seemed to him as if he had passed beyond the veil. His heart was full of the Resurrection. He could not get away from all these holy memories. Then suddenly came the thought: when death comes I must be brave. He remembered a story his mother had once told him of a Roman executioner who, on receiving orders to behead a young Christian,

had been so overcome with pity that he had fainted. The youth had revived him, and comforted him as bravely as if it has been his duty to die, as it was the executioner's to kill. But then Konrad told himself: you are a guilty creature, and cannot compare yourself with a saint. Would you be brave enough to act like that? It is sweet to die with Jesus, but it is still sweeter to live with Him.

The gaoler asked him if he would care to go out once more into the open air.

Out into the air? Out into the prison yard, where all the refuse was thrown, even the human refuse? No. He thanked him; he would prefer to remain in his cell. It could not be for long now.

"No; it will not be for long now," said the old man. But he did not tell him that in the meantime the Chancellor had died of his wounds. From the "old grumbler's" increased tenderness Konrad might have suspected that his case did not stand in a favourable light.

"If you are truly brave," the old man told him, "the next time you go out you shall walk under green trees."

"But now? Not now?" Konrad thought of a reprieve, and grew excited. A red flush stained his cheeks.

"No; I did not mean that. You know the King is far away. But it may come any time. I am waiting for it anxiously. You know, Ferleitner, after this I shall resign my post."

At the same time the priest came again. He always entered the dark cell with a cheerful face and a glad "God be with you!" It was his office to bring comfort, if only he knew the right way. As a rule the monk came in, wiping the perspiration from his brow with a coarse

blue handkerchief, and loudly assuring the prisoner how pleasantly cool it was in his cell. But this time he was seized with a strange fear. How did the prisoner look? Emaciated to a skeleton, his teeth prominent between fleshless lips, his eyes wide open, a wondrous fire burning in their depths.

"As you will never send for me, my dear Ferleitner, I have come again unasked to see how you fare. You are not ill?"

"Has the sentence come?" asked the prisoner.

"Not that I know of," answered the monk; "but I see I am disturbing you at your work."

Konrad had neglected to put away the sheets he had written, and so had to confess that he had been writing.

"Is n't it too dark to see to write here?"

"You get accustomed to it. At first it was dark, but now it seems to get lighter and lighter."

"So you 've made your will at last?" asked the father, raising his eyebrows. He meant to be humorous.

"A sort of one!"

"Let 's see, then. You have something to leave?"

"Not I, but another."

The father turned over the sheets, read a line here and there, shook his shaven head a little, and said: "It seems to resemble the New Testament. Have you been copying it from the Gospel?"

"No, I have n't got a New Testament. That 's why I had to write this for myself."

"A Gospel! You 've written one for yourself out of your own head?"

"Not exactly, or perhaps just a little. I 've written what I could remember. I will be responsible for the errors."

"My curiosity grows," cried the father. "May I read it?"

"It 's not worth your trouble, but I knew of nothing else to help me."

"The work has exhausted you, Ferleitner."

"No; on the contrary, I may almost say it has revived me. I 'm sorry it is finished. I thought of nothing else; I forgot everything."

The fire has consumed him, thought the monk.

"Ferleitner, will you let me take it away with me for a few days?"

Konrad gave his permission shyly. The monk gathered the sheets together, and thrust them carelessly into his pouch, so that the roll stuck out at the top. When he had gone, Konrad gazed sadly into emptiness and longed for his manuscript. How happy he had been with it all those weeks! What would the priest think of it? Everything would be wrong. Such people see their God with other eyes than ours. And if he criticised it, all the pleasure would go out of it.

But Konrad did not have to do without it long. The father brought it back the next morning. He had begun to read it the evening before, and had sat up all night to finish it. But he would not give his opinion, and Conrad did not ask for it. Almost helplessly, they sat at the rough table, while the monk tried to think how he could express his thoughts. After a while, he took up the manuscript, laid it down again, and said that of course, from

the ecclesiastical point of view, there would naturally be some objections.

"The history of the Pharisees, as the author gave it, was not altogether correct. I know, Ferleitner, that you asked me for a copy of the New Testament. If I had known that you had gone so far, I would willingly have given you one. But perhaps it is better so. Though I must tell you, Konrad Ferleitner, that nothing has given me so much pleasure for a long while as these meditations and — I may also say — fancies of yours. As for the faults, let those who take a pleasure in finding them, look for them. The living faith is the one important thing, and that is there, my son!" He laid his hand on the prisoner's head. "I feel how deeply religious your heart must be, and I will administer the sacrament to you. Yes, Konrad, you are saved. Pray fervently."

Konrad covered his face with his hands, and wept quietly. The priest's words made him so happy.

"I even think," continued the father, after a pause, "that others who are seeking for the simple word of God, and cannot find it, might read it. There must be many such people in hospitals, doss-houses, and prisons, and especially those who are in your situation. Would you have any objection?"

"My God, why should I?" replied Konrad. "If this work of mine could be the help to other poor wretches that it has been to me! But I do not know — it was not so meant. I wrote it only for myself."

"Naturally, one or two things must be altered," said the father. "We would go through it again together."

"But, holy father," asked the prisoner wistfully, "that is — if you think there will be time?"

"Besides, we must try and find a suitable title. Have you not thought that your child must have a name?"

"I wrote the letters I.N.R.I. at the top."

"It is wonderful. I don't know what to suggest. But we must have a sub-title."

"The title 's a matter of absolute indifference to me," said Konrad; "perhaps you can find one."

"I will think it over. May I take the manuscript away again? I must try and become literary in my old age. If a carpenter lad can write a whole book, a Franciscan monk can at least find a title! Have you anything on your mind, my son? No? Then God be with you. I will come again soon." At the door he turned: "Tell me, my son, does the gaoler give you food enough?"

"More than I need."

. . . . .

Outside it was hot summer-time. Konrad knew nothing of it, he had not thought of it. The gaoler came with the permission that, for an exception, he would be allowed to walk for half an hour in the garden. Konrad felt quite indifferent. As the warder led him along the vaulted passage, he staggered slightly; he had almost forgotten how to walk. He steadied himself on his companion's arm and said: "I feel so strange."

"Hold on to me; nothing will happen to you."

"Are we going right out into the open?"

"From now, you will go for a short walk in the garden every day."

"I do not know," said Konrad hesitating. "I am afraid — of the sun."

They were out under the open sky, in the wide dazzling green light. Konrad stood still for a moment and covered his eyes with his hand, then he looked up, and covered them again, and began to tremble. The warder remained silent, and supported him as he tottered along under the shade of the horse-chestnuts. On either side stretched green banks glowing with flowers and roses, their bright colours quivering like flame blown by the wind. Above was the blue sky with the great burning sun. And all around he heard the songs of the birds. Oh, life! life! He had almost forgotten what it meant — to live! He groaned aloud, it might have been either from sorrow or joy. Then he sat down on a bench and paused exhausted, and gazed out into the endless light. Tears trickled slowly down his hollow cheeks.

After a time the warder started to go on. Konrad raised himself unsteadily, and they moved slowly forward. They came to a white marble bust standing on a stone pillar surrounded with flowers.

Konrad stood still, shaded his eyes with his hand, looked at the statue, and asked: "Who is that?"

"That is the king," answered the warder.

Konrad gazed at it thoughtfully. And then he said softly and much moved: "How kindly he looks at me!"

"Yes, he is a kind master."

Then joy slowly entered the heart of the poor sinner. The world is beautiful. People are good. Life is everlasting. And the heavenly Father reigns over all. . . .

The warder looked at his watch. "It is time to return."

Konrad was taken back to his cell. He stumbled over the threshold and knocked up against the table, it was so dark. But his heart rejoiced. The world was beautiful. People were good. . . .

Then, gradually, fear returned. He was tired and lay down for a little on the straw. The key grated in the lock. Konrad started to his feet in terror. What was coming? What was coming?

The father entered quickly and cheerfully. Swinging the manuscript in his hand, he cried: "Glad tidings! Glad tidings!"

Konrad's hands fluttered to his breast. "Glad tidings? It had come? Life — to live again?" So he cried aloud. He stood for a moment motionless, then he sat down on the wooden bench.

"Yes, my son," the monk continued. "We will call the book, 'Glad Tidings,' I.N.R.I. Glad tidings of a poor sinner. That will suit the Gospel; that sounds well, does it not?" He stopped and started — "Ferleitner, what is the matter?"

Konrad had fallen against the wall, his head sunk on his breast. The breath rattled in his throat. The father reached quickly for the water-pitcher to revive him. He grumbled good-naturedly that he should have lost courage so quickly, and bathed his forehead tenderly. Then he noticed the stillness of the breast and the eyes — how glazed they were! He shouted for help. The gaoler appeared. He looked, paused a moment, and then said, softly: "It is well."

GEN THEO SEMINARY LIBRARY

There was silence. Suddenly the old man cried out: "It is well. Thou are merciful, Holy God!"

Later, as the Franciscan passed through the long passages in melancholy thought, he thanked God for the blessed miracle of the misunderstanding. At the gate he met the governor. Heavily, supporting each step by his stick, he came along. When he saw the monk he went up to him: "Dear father," he said hoarsely. "Alas! you will have a hard task to-night. The criminal Ferleitner will need a priest. To-morrow morning at six o'clock all will be over."

A short silence. Then the father answered: "Your Excellency, the criminal, Ferleitner, needs neither priest nor judge. He is pardoned."

THE END

THE McCLURE PRESS, NEW YORK

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Rosegger, P. 244.2
R721
I.N.R.I. a prisoner's
244.2
R721